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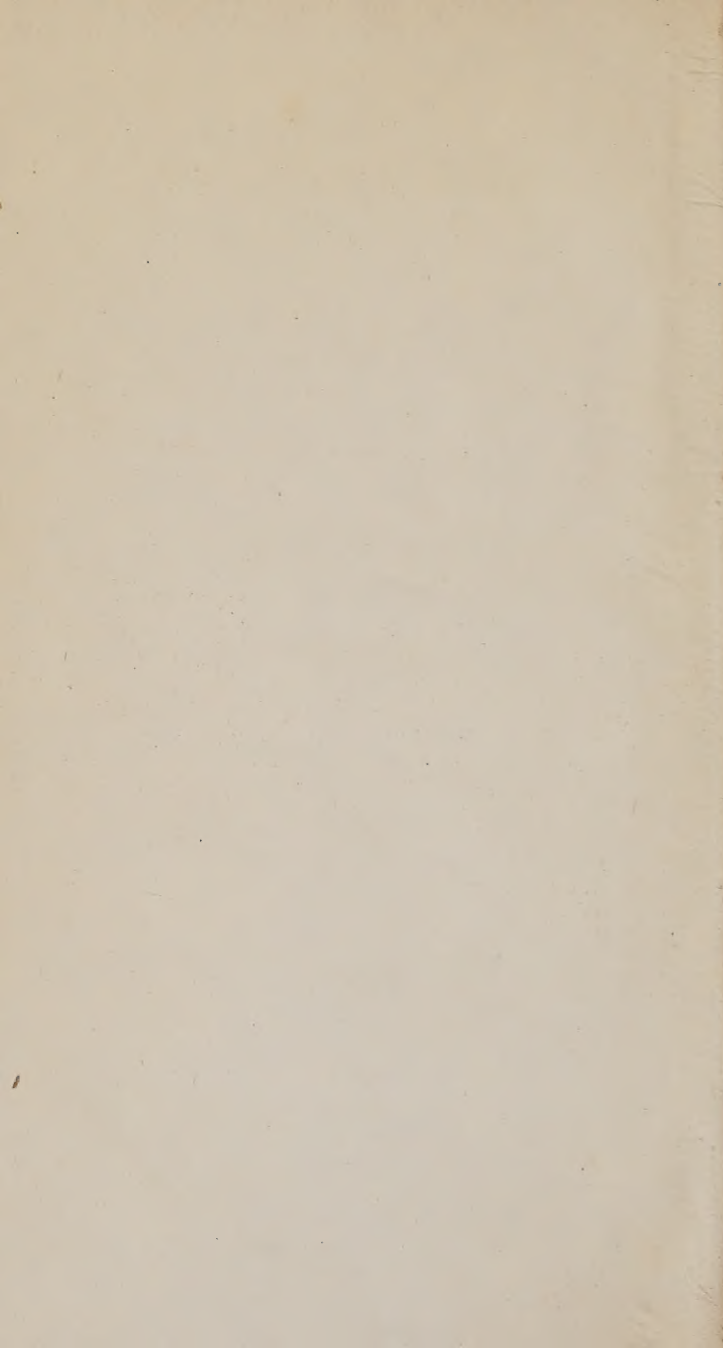
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Texts ms

# PARISH SERMONS.

*FIRST SERIES.*

BY

HARVEY GOODWIN, D.D.

DEAN OF ELY.

Third Edition.

DISCARD

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## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

So many volumes of Sermons exist, and so many more are yearly published, that it becomes a duty both to himself and the public, on the part of any person who would increase the number, to consider well his reasons for doing so. My reasons for publishing the present volume, though as I believe sufficient, are of too private a nature to interest the Reader; and I must be content to assure him, that no overweening conceit of the merit of my sermons, nor of my own call to teach others than those definitely assigned to me, has led to the printing of addresses, originally written merely as Parish Sermons. Nevertheless I must needs plead guilty to the belief, that the contents of this volume are so far plain and simple, as to be capable of being in some degree instructive and useful, by the blessing of Him who giveth the increase to that which is planted and watered by His Ministers: if I had entertained no hope grounded on such belief as

this, I could not have committed my writings to press.

I have printed the Sermons, with a very few verbal alterations, as they were preached; the consequence has been a certain roughness and want of finish in several places; but I considered that compositions of this kind were likely, in any process of remodelling, to lose more in strength and point, than they would gain in accuracy of arrangement or expression.

H. G.

CAMBRIDGE,

*January 1847.*

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ADVERTISEMENT TO THE SECOND EDITION.

It will be judged from what I have stated in the preceding Preface, that I did not anticipate any very extended circulation for this volume; as however the edition has been exhausted and the book still continues in demand, I have had no hesitation in putting forth a second edition.

H. G.

CAMBRIDGE,

*January, 1855.*



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## SERMON I.

### CHRIST PRAYING.

S. LUKE xi. 1.

It came to pass, that as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray.

THIS verse is one of a great number which bring before us that very remarkable feature in the life of our Lord, namely, His habit of constant prayer. I call it a remarkable feature, because though we can perhaps understand in some degree the duty of prayer on our parts, it seems a wonderful thing that that same duty should extend to the Son of God. There appears to be something reasonable in the principle, that we poor creatures, being utterly dependent upon God for every breath we draw and for our being at all, should own our dependence upon Him, and ask at His hands those blessings of which we stand in need; it seems according to all analogy, that if we want anything from those who are

able to supply our wants, we should come and ask for what we need; but this scarcely applies to Him, who was no creature supplicating for the supply of His wants, but the only begotten Son, of the same substance with the Father: and therefore, those passages of Scripture, which speak of Christ praying, are worthy of our deepest consideration. And perhaps one thing which they shew us is this, that the mere supply of wants is not the only reason for prayer; that prayer is not mere *asking*, but is the means by which the soul has communion with God; it is *worship*, by means of which our spirit expands and rises above earth, and has communion with the Holy Spirit: so that mere want was not the reason of our Lord's prayerful life; when He spent a whole night in prayer, He was not merely asking for gifts, but He was, as it were, renewing that intimate connexion with His Father which He had before He left heaven; His spirit, which had been grieved and harassed by the contradiction of sinners during the day, then found peace and rest in the society (if one may so speak) of His Father. Thus we read that after the miracle of feeding five thousand with the five loaves and two fishes, "He departed into a mountain to *pray*." Our Saviour's life was a life of prayer, because it was the life of one living

altogether above the world, of one whose heart and affections were never set upon this world, but devoted with quite infinite zeal to another.

But there is one way of viewing the life of our Lord, which presents us with no difficulty and is very instructive: it is to consider Him as an example, and His life as a specimen of that kind of life which His servants ought to lead; and in this point of view the praying of our Lord is a most instructive thing for us to contemplate, and a wonderful pattern for us to follow. And I think there can be no doubt that the reason why it is so frequently recorded, that our Lord retired from the multitude into a solitary place to pray, is that He may be an example to us to do the same; and that we may learn this lesson, that if we would have our practical lives like that of our Lord, if we would shew the same noble, loving, charitable, unselfish, God-honouring spirit, which He ever did, then we must feed on the same food that he fed upon; we must be nourished by prayer; we cannot do anything great and good without that which was the basis and stay of the life and deeds of Christ our Lord.

Let us then consider our Lord's life as an example in this respect; and let us observe this first, that He seems to have undertaken no great work without earnest prayer for God's guidance.

For instance, one great work, which our Lord had to do at the beginning of His ministry, was to choose Apostles who should be the pillars of His Church. How did He choose them? We read in S. Luke vi. 12, "It came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued *all night* in prayer to God: and when it was day, He called unto Him His disciples, and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named apostles." Here you see what was Christ's preparation for choosing His apostles—a whole night spent in prayer: this was a good way of beginning a great work, an example to all time that men undertake no great work without first solemnly asking God's blessing and praying for His support in what they do. I think, if we undertook everything in this spirit, we should have more success, and more happiness in our success, than usually we have. But again, on a still more awful occasion, namely, in the prospect of death by the cross, you will remember how our Lord retired into the garden of Gethsemane and there prayed; a most affecting prayer too, and yet one which could not be answered, one which He knew could not be answered, and yet He prayed; and no doubt, by means of prayer, though He did not gain His request that the cup might pass from Him, yet He gained strength



and courage to drink the bitter cup without murmuring. Thus prayer fortified Christ against the horrors of his last hours, and He dare not undertake that last grapple and struggle with the powers of darkness, until He had first prayed in very agony and received strength from above. Yet it was not only on such great occasions as these that our Saviour prayed, for you will find in the Gospels continual notices of His leaving the multitude and retiring to some mountain or solitary place. You may consider such communion with heaven as the real food on which Christ fed, or, to change the figure, this was the string which bound him to God during the days of His flesh. And you are to observe therefore, that it was not merely when He had some special boon to ask, that our Saviour prayed: to pray was with Him something more than merely asking for favours—it was to worship and adore the Father, to rise from the world and above all bodily cares and wants, and join in spirit that glorious company of Angels and Cherubim and Seraphim, who ever live in the light of God's countenance, and cry, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God.

Now our blessed Saviour has thus taught us by His example the proper conduct of our lives in regard to prayer: He has shewn us that it is

to be a constant thing, a habit, according to those words of S. Paul, "Pray without ceasing." He has taught us that it is impossible for our spirits to grow and to become such as God would have them to be, unless we feed them in the same way as His spirit was fed during His abode here. And I think the reason why we do not all of us follow His example is clear enough: our Lord was glad to get away from the crowd and spend a few hours in prayer to God, because He loved God better than the crowd; He loved to be with God and to speak to Him and pray to Him, and receive visits from the holy angels which were sent from heaven to comfort Him, because He loved God supremely, and a glimpse of His presence was worth to Him all that the world could do for Him: and if we had the same way of judging of things, if we looked upon God and the world in the same way as our Lord did, we should act as He did, we should feel that there was infinite happiness in entering into our closet or kneeling down in church with His faithful servants, and, free from all other thoughts, giving ourselves up wholly to communion with Him, who is holy Himself, and wills that we all should partake of His holiness and become holy too. But the misfortune of our nature is that it has received a wrong twist or bias, it is bent earth-

wards instead of heavenwards, and so when left to itself it bends down and holds communion with earth, instead of turning its face upwards and holding converse with heaven. When Adam was in a state of innocence, then he delighted in the converse of God; it was to him a happier hour than any other in the day, when he heard the voice of the Lord in the garden: but no sooner had he sinned than all such delight was gone; then when he heard the voice of God he was afraid and hid himself; he had been led astray by the desire of earthly delights which God had forbidden him, and he gained what he desired, the knowledge of good and evil, but lost what he thought not of, the favour of God. And ever since then have we his children suffered from the sin which he brought into the world: we find it easy enough, like him, to take delight in forbidden fruits, and we love those things which God has told us we are not to love; but where is that pure delight in the company of our Father, where that preference of doing His will to doing our own, where those heavenly tastes, which Adam had and which he lost by sin? we find them in no one since Adam's time, save in our Lord Jesus Christ. All we the rest have gone astray; all we the rest have gross appetites and unheavenly tastes; we prefer the husks and

garbage of the world to the pure food of our Father's house; we prefer serving as bondsmen to the prince of this world, to the free home of God: and therefore the worship of God, the contemplation of His admirable perfections, the honouring Him with our lips and hearts, the confession of our weakness and wants, the acknowledgment of His mercies, the earnest supplication that we may be made like Christ and may be washed by His blood from all filth and defilement—these things which constitute prayer are things strange and distasteful to us; we require help to enable us to perform such duties aright; we require to use much exertion and care before they become a pleasure and delight.

Now all this being so, there is, you see, a natural difficulty in prayer to all of us; there is a difficulty which meets us in the very threshold, namely, that our hearts are not with God, as our Saviour's was, but with the world. But beyond this there is another difficulty, which is this, that even though we do desire to pray to God, we may not know how to pray. It is an awful thing to approach the Almighty God, and we may well tremble lest our lips should utter any word which may offend Him, or lest our hearts should harbour any thought unworthy of His presence. If a person has to make a petition to another



who is much higher in station than himself, he naturally feels alarmed, timid, afraid of saying anything which may be out of place; and so, in a manner, is it with us when approaching God. We may easily pray and yet not pray aright, even as those proud Pharisees did in the time of our Lord, who prayed at the corners of the street and made long prayers for a pretence; hollow hypocrites that they were, with hearts full of uncharitableness, who devoured widows' houses and oppressed the poor, and thought to please God with their fair words: or we may pray amiss, like those Jews of whom we read in the prophet Ezekiel,\* who gained no answer to their prayers because they did not live up to them: or we may ask amiss, as S. James tells us,† by asking for things to satisfy our mere natural lusts and tastes: in fact, to pray altogether aright is one of the most difficult of things, one in which we require more divine assistance, more humility and quietness of spirit and desire to do the will of God, more of the spirit of Christ our Lord, than for any other duty whatever.

And the disciples of our Lord seem to have thought somewhat in this way: they saw their Lord's practice, they found that He prayed continually and earnestly, and they desired to follow

\* Ezek. xiv. 3, 4.

† S. James iv. 3.

in His footsteps; but they felt that they wanted teaching and guidance. And so we read in the text, that on one occasion, very early in His ministry, they came to Him after He had been Himself engaged in prayer, and said, "Lord, teach us to pray." It was one of the disciples who spoke these words, but no doubt he was the spokesman of the rest: they all wanted to pray as Christ did, for they believed that the secret of that surpassing excellence which they observed in Him, and which they admired so devoutly, even though at present they knew not how much greater He was than anything they had dreamed of, I say they believed that His immeasurable superiority to themselves, His wisdom, His heavenly temper, His unwearied zeal in doing the will of God, were due to His continual communion with heaven, to the supplies of strength which He drew down by means of prayer; and therefore they wished to pray as He did. They had not been, I should conceive, wholly without prayer hitherto; they had prayed in the synagogue, and probably also by themselves; and they had seen much prayer of a kind in the practice of the Pharisees; but they had never seen such praying as that of Christ before, never any which seemed so retired, and so devout, and so full of blessing. He seemed to shew in His life the fruits of His

prayers, and they longed to *pray* like Him in order that they might *be* like Him, and therefore it was that they came with the petition of the text, "Lord, teach us to pray."

In answer to this request, our Saviour was graciously pleased to give to His disciples that wonderful form of words which we call the LORD'S PRAYER, a prayer which has been used by His Church ever since, and which is deemed so necessary a part of all Christian worship, that no single service of the Church exists in which this prayer does not occur. Now this prayer is worthy of the deepest study from us all; it is not only most valuable in itself as a mode of addressing God, but also, if we examine it, we shall find that it will teach us the true type or pattern of all proper prayers: for though we use other words in prayer to God than those wherewith Christ has furnished us, yet ought the character of all our addresses to be the same as that which belongs to His, they ought to be formed as it were on the same model. And I think that when our Lord desired us in praying to use His prayer, He could not have intended to command us to use no other words, for the practice of good men in all ages shews that His directions have always been otherwise interpreted: but so much as this He certainly did mean, that our prayers should

breathe the same spirit as His, that all we say in prayer should harmonize well with that which is the example for all prayers. And therefore, if we wish to learn the proper character of Christian prayer, the best way seems to be to study the model which our Lord has given us: if we wish to know how a watch should be made, we take one to pieces, we examine its wheels and pinions and fastenings, and so we learn more of the art than we could learn by reading many books: and in like manner, if we wish to learn what real Christian prayer is, let us take to pieces that only specimen of prayer which we are sure is perfect because it came from Christ, and let us see how it is formed, how the different members are beautiful in themselves, and how they are all compacted together, and together form a beautiful sacrifice to the praise of Almighty God.

With this view, Christian Brethren, I purpose, if God permit, to preach to you a series of discourses on the Lord's Prayer. I shall take it sentence by sentence, and endeavour, with God's help, to point out to you, so far as I am able, the meaning of the different parts, and shew you their fitness and their beauty: and I trust that we shall find benefit from the study, that we shall see more clearly the wisdom of our Lord's words by examining them all, and that we shall gain

some knowledge of what prayer ought to be, and so shall be able to judge how far our own prayers are or have been such as they ought. Indeed I think we cannot meditate without advantage on such a subject as this: if we prepare our minds seriously and reverently, we cannot meditate without advantage on the words of Christ Himself, on words which He put into the mouths of His disciples in condescension to their weakness, because they had asked Him to teach them to pray; on words which have been in the mouths of saints and good men oftener than any other words, nay, which I think one may say have been used oftener than any form of words of any kind. Oh, how marvellous a thing is it, that we should be privileged to use words dictated by the Son of God Himself; that He should have graciously taught us words which cannot but obtain an answer so they be earnestly used; that He should thus, as it were, have given us the keys of His Father's house, so that we may enter in as we please and fill ourselves with His treasures. Never were words spoken which echoed so long from land to land and from age to age, as those words which our Saviour spoke when His disciples besought Him saying, "Lord, teach us to pray."

As I do not intend in this discourse to enter upon the consideration of the Lord's Prayer, I

shall employ the time in saying a few words respecting the general features which ought to belong to prayer, according to our Lord. We find some directions about this in S. Matthew,\* where our Lord tells us that we are not to be as the hypocrites, who loved to pray in the streets that men might see and admire them: this was the first thing to be guarded against, this hollow show of religion: there were persons in the time of our Lord, who loved to be *thought* pious persons, but did not care about *being* so; persons who wore long robes and broad phylacteries, that is, portions of Scripture written on parchment and worn as part of their dress—this was to shew their love for the law of God; and these men you might see in the street stopping at a corner to pray, because the precise hour of prayer was come: and perhaps the disciples of Christ had been in the habit of admiring these men, thinking how good they were, and wishing to be like them: but the very first thing Christ did was to warn His disciples against them; whomsoever they imitated, it must not be those hollow professors with their high pretence and rotten hearts, it must not be those who sought the praise of men and thought little of the praise of Him who seeth in secret, Him who is present in the closet as much as in the

\* Chap. vi. 5th verse, and those following.



market-place, and who looks not to long robes and phylacteries, but to a heart honest and earnest and pure. Now I suppose that although *we* do not pray in public to catch applause, yet we may come under the condemnation of our Lord by being like the hypocrites. I suppose, for instance, that a person who comes to church because it is considered respectable to do so, is seeking the praise of men as really as the Pharisees at the corners of the street in olden days: times are different now, and a man who should choose the street or the market-place for his place of prayer, would not have the praise of men but their ridicule, and therefore there is small temptation to any one to follow the example of the hypocrites to the letter; but I say that He may follow it in spirit, and that any man does so who comes to this house of prayer with any hollow purpose, with any purpose, in fact, short of that one purpose of worshipping God, asking pardon of sin, and obtaining strength for the time to come.

So much for the *manner* of prayer: it is to be quiet, unostentatious, real, from the heart, humble, addressed to Him who sees in secret, not to gain the applause of men or any worldly advantage. For the *matter* of prayer, I will only allude to that advice of our Saviour's, where He says, "Use not vain repetitions;" by which words,

I should tell you, it is not meant that we are not to make the same petition more than once; for our Lord Himself, in the garden of Gethsemane, prayed three times using the same words; what is meant by the word which we render "using vain repetitions," is rather using pompous, unmeaning, ill-considered language; as Solomon says,\* "God is in heaven and thou upon earth, therefore let thy words be few." It is, I conceive, chiefly to guard against this danger, that the Church has ever used fixed forms of prayer, that no prayers may be offered which are unworthy of God; and I conceive that we sin against this rule of our Lord, if we address Almighty God in prayer in irreverent familiar terms, if we forget that He is in heaven and we upon earth, and so speak to Him as to one of ourselves, instead of taking the shoes off our feet, and putting our mouths in the dust, and approaching Him with the deepest reverence.

Again, our Lord taught us that although we are to pray reverently, yet we are to pray earnestly, as those who will take no denial. He spoke the parable of the widow applying to the unjust judge, and who obtained her suit by her constancy, to shew us how we ought to pray; and He promised that those things which we ask in

\* Eccles. v. 2.

faith we certainly shall have. And we have the example of Jacob, who obtained his suit by wrestling with God; and that of the woman who was a Greek, and who came to Christ for the healing of her child, and who by her much importunity obtained the blessing. Wherefore it appears, that the spirit which God approves is that of earnestness and perseverance; He does not love coldness and lukewarmness; He loves genuine, heartfelt zeal, which is ever praying to Him for increased blessings, and ever pressing on, and never satisfied with what has been given, but desiring more abundant supplies.

I have heard it said, Christian Brethren, and I fear it is true, that the worst performed work that we do in the day is our prayers: I fear that many of us, perhaps most of us, must confess this to be true. We are earnest in other things, our merchandise, our work, our studies; but how few of us are diligent in prayer, how few of us look upon this as our daily bread, how few of us live a life in any distant degree resembling that of our Saviour Christ. I fear the same thing is spoiling our communion with God which spoilt Adam's, a feeling of enmity to God, a consciousness of our wills not being wholly like His, of our having tastes which He does not approve, of our hearts being set upon the world. But,

Christian Brethren, this must not be: we must follow Christ; we cannot attain to full stature, we cannot become Christian *men*, unless we are nourished with the same food as that which He eat; we cannot be beloved of God as He was, unless we live in communion with God, unless we ever live in prayer to Him.

Wherefore, Christian Brethren, that we may pray aright and so obtain the things we pray for, let us study that pattern of prayer which Christ our Lord has left us: we shall find every word full of meaning, every word breathing the wisdom of Him who first spoke it in compassion to our infirmities; and let us thank Him from the bottom of our hearts, that He has been pleased to supply out of His own storehouse the first great want of man, namely guidance in approaching the throne of Almighty God. If any man thinks that he knows sufficiently well of himself how to come before God and bow himself at the footstool of His Majesty, of course such a man, if there be such, will think lightly of the inspired words of Christ, and not see that they are better than other words, that they are in fact the best words which ever human mouth spake: but he who knows his own infirmities, and the greatness of God, and his own unworthiness, and who is therefore deeply sensible of the difficulty of the task of approaching God

aright, will gladly join, (yea, Christian Brethren, let *us* all join), in ascribing glory, and praise, and worship, and thanksgiving, to Him who, in compassion to our infirmities, hath been pleased to “teach us to pray.”

## SERMON II.

### THE LORD'S PRAYER.

LUKE xi. 2.

He said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art  
in Heaven.

I SPOKE to you, Christian Brethren, in my last sermon, respecting the difficulty of true prayer, and the need we all have of being taught from above how we ought to pray: and what I said to you then arose out of the petition which the disciples made to their Lord that He would teach them how to pray, a petition which He was graciously pleased to answer, and which He answered by giving them that form of words which is called the Lord's Prayer. Now this prayer is, as might be expected, a perfect prayer: it is not indeed such that it supersedes the necessity of all other prayers, for others have always been used in the Church; but it is a perfect pattern of prayer, so that no prayer can be of the right kind, un-



less it in some degree breathes the same spirit, unless it approaches God in something like the same way. To illustrate this, remember our Lord's own prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, a special prayer suited to that particular occasion, and therefore containing petitions not to be found in the Lord's Prayer; but observe notwithstanding how it breathes the same spirit, for it concludes, "Nevertheless, not My will but Thine be done;" here are nearly the same words as those in His own prayer, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." And in like manner all our prayers ought to be formed on the model of the Lord's Prayer; and in order that they may, it is useful to examine the nature of that prayer, to see how it is constructed, what is the real beauty and excellence of it: for if we have thoroughly imbued our minds with the spirit of the Lord's Prayer, if we really become sensible of its surpassing excellence and majesty, then we shall be able to judge how far other prayers are of the right sort; we shall not be led away by any false show, we shall abhor all modes of addressing God which are such as Christ our Lord would not have used. There is, I fear, in many persons a diseased taste in respect of prayer; persons sometimes can see no beauty in the prayers of the Church, but can see much beauty in showy ad-

dresses to God, full of large words, swelling, noisy, and therefore breathing anything but the spirit of the Lord's Prayer. This should not be so; Christians *should* have their tastes and judgments so formed and purified, that they love instinctively those things which Christ would approve, and hate those things which He would condemn; that they love therefore prayers which are like His, lowly, reverent, submissive, and shrink from those which are wordy and swelling, and which breathe the spirit of self-applause and self-confidence, in fact that spirit which belongs to the natural man, before his mind is enlightened by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, or his eye opened to see the wondrous wisdom of the teaching of Christ.

But to proceed with the consideration of the different parts of the Lord's Prayer, which let us pray God to write upon our hearts, and to enable us thoroughly to understand and love. I have read for a text only the first few words of the prayer, "Our Father which art in heaven;" for you will observe that this forms the first distinct portion of the prayer. You may consider the Lord's Prayer to consist of three parts: 1st, the address; 2nd, the petitions; 3rd, the ascription of glory. In this sermon we will engage ourselves with the first of them, the address. Whom do we address? Our Father who is in heaven.

This form of address is remarkable, because it was not the ordinary form of address before Christ came; I remember hardly any instance in the Old Testament in which such a form is used. God did not reveal Himself peculiarly as a Father to the men of old time, but as a God, great, terrible, and powerful, yet withal tender, loving, and kind. Sometimes the goodness of God is spoken of as being like that of a Father, as where the Psalmist says, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that love Him:"\* still the idea of a Father is not that which is put forward as the great all-comprehending idea of God, as it is in the New Testament. For I consider that this is emphatically *the* character under which God is revealed to us through Christ, namely that of a Father. When our Lord tells us that in prayer we are to approach God as our Father, He does in fact tell us, that to be a son of God is peculiarly the Christian privilege; our prayer to Him proclaims our privilege, the address which Christ has put in our mouths is as it were the charter of our birthright: Christ has bid us call God our Father, and therefore doubtless He is our Father and we are His children. Now I wish to examine two points connected with this privilege of addressing God as

\* Ps. ciii. 13.

our Father, and these two points are—1st, What is the meaning and extent of the privilege; and 2nd, How we came to possess it.

With regard to the meaning and extent of the privilege of being allowed to address God as our Father, you cannot too carefully bear in mind that the relation which is expressed when we speak of God as our Father, is something quite different from, something quite beyond, something much better than, anything which we have by nature. We may if we please call God our Father because He made us and preserves us, but there is something much more in the name than this; for we are spirits, not mere animals, and creation is a small boon if it were all, that is, it would be little to rejoice in that we could claim as our Father the great God in heaven merely because He made us; has He not made the beasts too? Moreover we have to remember that by sin we are alienated from God: the fatherly affection, which we may suppose to exist towards us His creatures, is terribly damped and deadened by the existence of sin which separates us from Him, so that by nature we are at enmity to Him. The Catechism, you know, tells us that we are by nature children of wrath, that is, we are liable to the anger of God; we are not at one with Him as Adam was when he was pronounced very good.

God can only thoroughly love what is good, He cannot love what is unholy, impure, sinful; but that is what we naturally are, everybody knows it, everybody confesses that men are naturally prone to what is bad. Corn does not grow unless it is sown and weeded; but weeds grow apace without sowing or care, they sow themselves, they grow without tillage or industry of man, nay, the less of this they have the better they grow. And so it is with ourselves: what is good requires care, the watering of the Holy Spirit, great efforts, and endeavours on our part; but there is no need of such efforts to foster bad habits and sin, they grow of themselves, they are the ill weeds which grow apace and spring as it were naturally out of the human heart. Look at that babe, how innocent it seems, how gentle, how lovely; but it will not be long before it will begin to shew what is in it, bad tempers, evil passions, revenge, selfishness, sensuality, disobedience, covetousness; these things will soon shew themselves; you need not teach the child such things, they are *there*, there in its infant heart, and soon they will prove that they are there by shooting up into a fearful crop of weeds, unless some good means be taken to clean the soil. Such are we naturally, not by creation, for God made us holy, but by Adam's fall; and therefore being such we cannot be at

one with God, we cannot love Him nor can He love us thoroughly while we remain such; we must be at enmity with Him, aliens, estranged, separated from Him in whom alone is life and joy and everlasting peace.

Wherefore we poor sinners, fallen from our first estate, can have no right to call God our Father. Adam, you remember, hid himself among the trees of the garden, and so must we hide ourselves from the presence of God, and not venture to call ourselves His children: we were His children doubtless, but how do we know that He has not disinherited us? how do we know how wide the chasm may be which sin has made? how do we know that recovery is possible, and that we may still call Him Father? Yet our Saviour, when He taught us to pray, bid us say, "Our Father which art in heaven!" therefore we may come as children, for Christ has given us leave; and I conclude from this permission, that the chasm I spoke of between God and us has been bridged over, that the wound of sin has been healed, that forgiveness of sin is possible, even from a just and jealous God: all this is implied in the permission to use the name "Our Father;" it would be a mockery of our helplessness to allow us to call God Father, if it were not implied in the permission that God was really our



Father in a very high and exalted sense: when God calls persons by any name, He makes them what He calls them; if He calls us children, He makes us children, and in like manner, if He bids us call Him Father, He makes Himself in reality a Father to us, and He takes us into a relationship which we had not before, and grants us privileges such and so great as it becomes His majesty to bestow.

What I wish therefore to impress upon you is, that the permission, or rather the command, to call God our Father does imply a very real relationship between Him and ourselves, and also that this relationship is something which by nature we have not; that whatever bond there was between God and man by creation had been broken by Adam's sin, and therefore to reinstate man in his position required something new,—who could say what it did require? It was a great work which had to be performed; sin is a dreadful thing, far more dreadful than we commonly imagine; it is deep-rooted, far-spreading; it is enmity against God; and he who has the plague of sin upon him, as we all have, is separated from God by a great gulf, and it is a great thing, yea a marvellous thing, that by any means this gulf should be closed, and God and man reconciled, and man permitted to say "Our Father."

Yet, by the grace of God, the work has been accomplished, and we are brought nigh to God and admitted to the privileges of sons ; as S. Paul says, "Because ye are sons, God hath put the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father : wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."\* And again He speaks of us as "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ : "† here, you will observe, the Apostle is carrying out the figure of son and father. I said just now that when God *calls* us sons He *makes* us sons, and so it is that because He calls Himself our Father He makes us His heirs, He gives us the inheritance which belongs to His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, making us fellow-heirs with Him ; and what is this inheritance ? surely this, to live for ever in the presence of God and enjoy the light of God's countenance.

Christian Brethren, it is indeed a privilege and a blessing worthy of God to bestow, and which we can never be too thankful for having received, that we, who deserve so little and who are so fallen from our high condition, should be permitted by the tender mercies of God to call Him our Father, to claim at His hands the privileges of sons, and to look forward to the full enjoyment

\* Gal. iv. 6, 7.

† Rom. viii. 17.

of our heritage in the life of the world to come. If we think what sin is, what a death-bearing thing it is, what strife and misery it has already worked in the world, and what terrible woe, ten times more terrible than anything hitherto seen, it will produce when allowed to shew itself in all its unmitigated consequences, we shall scarcely know how sufficiently to express our thankfulness to Him who has drawn us out of the pit, and called us His children, and promised to hear our prayers, and give us the portion of children both here and hereafter. Redemption from the curse of sin, the possibility of living a holy life, conquering the devil, becoming like Christ, dying in peace, being buried in hope, rising again in glory, all these arise from or are implied in the fact of God being our Father, in the fact of our being joint-heirs with Christ; and all these things should be habitually on our minds and influence our lives. If we are disposed to sin, the thought of being God's children should keep us from it, because it is for enemies and not for children to offend God; if we are disposed to murmur at our lot, the thought that God is our Father and that He will therefore surely provide for us, should keep us from it; if we are inclined to seek to please ourselves and not our Saviour, then the thought that we are not our own, but have been redeemed

and made children of God, should make us feel it to be our privilege and duty in all things to give ourselves up to Him and for Him, and serve Him with our bodies and our spirits which are His.

These are a few hints respecting the nature and extent of the privilege implied in our permission to call God our Father: and now as to the way in which we became possessed of the privilege. Here is the mystery of Godliness; it was through the sufferings and death of Christ. I have been speaking of the greatness of the privilege, and saying that it is something which by nature we cannot have and which we most urgently need, and which is so great a thing that it is worthy of God to bestow it upon us; but yet we shall estimate it more correctly, we shall assign to it more nearly its true value, if we regard it as having cost the life and death of Christ. The enmity which sin had introduced between God and man we may easily believe to be very great, by only looking at the misery it has brought about; but I think we gain even a deeper conception of the deadly character of this enmity, we have a clearer insight into the malignity of sin and the terrible character of its consequences, when we regard them as requiring the sacrifice of the Son of God to bring in peace and recon-

ciliation; the just for the unjust! the pure Son of God for the polluted sons of men! that is an astonishing thought! one might have perhaps conceived of a reconciliation, but by such means! it overwhelms us, it oppresses us, it confounds us, to think that the sting of sin should be so venomous and the effects of sin so all-pervading and destructive, that no means could be devised for bringing man back to God, and making him a son of God and heir with Christ, except the voluntary humiliation and sufferings and death of Christ the only Son. When, therefore, Christian Brethren, you use the words of the Lord's Prayer and say "Our Father," bear in mind how it has come about that you have been permitted to use those words: by using them you claim the benefits of Christ's passion, you address God by a name, which Christ, who taught you to use it, purchased with His own blood; through Him you are reconciled; through Him you approach the mercy-seat; through Him you have been made sons of God.

In fact, the name of Father as applied to God reminds us of all that has been done to purchase the name; the birth, the life, the agony, the bloody sweat, the cross, and passion of our Lord. Bear these in your minds, Christian Brethren, when you claim God as your Father.

Now let me make a few remarks on the last words of the text, "which art in heaven." I conceive that the intention of these words is to impress upon our minds the exceeding majesty of God, and our own smallness as compared with Him. God humbles Himself graciously to hear our prayers, and He bids us approach Him boldly and frequently, and in faith and without doubting; but still we are to remember that after all He is in heaven and we upon earth, and therefore we are to address Him with humility and fear: in one sense of course God is in the world as much as in heaven, He is about our path and spies out all our ways, yea the depths of the sea and even hell itself are no hiding-place from Him to whom all persons, places, and things are ever present; and I think it is partly because we might be apt to forget the majesty of God after we have called Him "our Father," that those words are added, "which art in heaven." These words seem to teach us that reverence and godly fear are, even for the best of us, the proper accompaniments of prayer to God, that we are never to forget that He whom we worship, though He condescends to us and deigns to allow us to come into His presence and call Him by the dearest of titles, is yet the great and terrible God, who punishes sin and will not spare proud rebellious spirits, who



sits on the throne of heaven and is worshipped by all created beings.

And perhaps another reason why the words "which art in heaven" were added, may be to remind us of God's power, that we are praying to Him who is able to grant our requests, because He is the great God who governs all things, who by His word created the heavens, and who by His power sustains all things which He has made. We are not praying to any God of our own devising, we are not bowing down to saint or angel or any created thing, but to Him who is in heaven, who is supreme over all, and who alone deserves that worship which the heavenly host ascribe to Him, saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts, heaven and earth are full of the majesty of Thy glory."

On the whole therefore, Christian Brethren, I think it appears that, in telling us to use the words "our Father which art in heaven," our blessed Lord conferred on us an infinite privilege, infinite because it brings us into living union with the Supreme God and makes us heirs of eternal life, infinite because it cost an infinite price, even His own most precious blood. And our Saviour assured us that we might, without presumption and with full assurance of acceptance, approach Almighty God and claim the privilege of sons;

and He has shewed us that our Father is able to answer our prayers, forasmuch as He is the King of heaven; and at the same time He has warned us that we must approach with reverence, because God *is* in heaven. And I conceive that when we use the words which our Lord has given us we ought to mean something of this kind, "Almighty God! Thou art my Creator, whom I ought to love and honour and obey; but I have been estranged from Thee by sin, and there is enmity betwixt Thee and me, and my will runs not parallel with Thine; yet in Thy mercy Thou hast devised a reconciliation and a way of atonement, and in Christ Thou hast adopted me, and hast received me in holy baptism, and made me a child of grace; and now feeling my own wants and the greatness of Thy mercy I venture to approach Thee according to Thy merciful permission, and to call Thee Father. And forasmuch as Thou art in heaven and I upon earth, I approach Thee reverently and with godly fear and a heart trembling to sin against Thee; yet I rejoice in Thy power because Thou art able to save to the uttermost, who art Lord of heaven and earth and things visible and invisible; wherefore I rejoice with trembling in approaching Thy throne, O our Father which art in heaven!"

The last thing I will notice is this, that the

address of the Lord's Prayer is to *our* Father. Thus the prayer is to the Father, not of me or you only, but of all Christian people; and so the Lord's Prayer is a witness to the communion which ought to exist between the members of the Christian Church. We are all, says the Apostle, members one of another; we have all been baptised into one body, of which Christ is the Head; and God is the Father of that body, and we pray to Him not as the Father of ourselves in particular, but as the Father of the body into which we have been grafted. Thus the Lord's Prayer brings before us our position as members of a body; it is the voice of a member of a Church, of one bound to his fellows by infinite mysterious ties, of one praying not for himself alone, but bearing upon his heart before God all those who are members of the same mystical body with Himself.

And now, Christian Brethren, I will say this word of exhortation: You are permitted to call the God of heaven your Father, you are commanded to pray to Him as such and to ask every gift you need of Him, believing assuredly that He will hear your prayers, even as we being evil know how to give good gifts to our children; wherefore having such privileges, you must bear in mind that you have a corresponding obligation

laid upon you to live as children of a heavenly Father, as children of a royal line, of a goodly heritage. You must beware lest you disgrace by your acts the profession you make in your prayer, of being the children of God: for be assured that nothing is so hateful to God, as nothing was so hateful to our Lord Jesus Christ in the days of His flesh, as prayer and practice at variance, prayers savouring of holiness and practice of worldliness: he who prays "Our Father which art in heaven," must remember that he is God's child and ever under his Father's eye, and that he must not live as though he had no heavenly Father, as though he were of the earth earthy, as though this life bounded his hopes, and this world and the pleasures it can give were the great end of his endeavours. He who has God for his Father must be wise in prosperity and patient in adversity, ever looking forward to the beatific vision of his Father, ever pressing forward toward the mark of his high calling, becoming more like the eldest born of God's family, the Head of our race, the pattern of humanity, the specimen of divine purity and holiness, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Because He is the Son of God, He has given us grace also to become the sons of God; and because God was His Father and the source of His strength and His ever-present help

while on earth, He has given permission and commandment to us His brethren to go to the same fountain for help and strength, and has given us words which we cannot misunderstand and which are sufficient to comfort the weakest and confirm the most doubting, even those heavenly words upon which I have been discoursing to you. Therefore let us ascribe all glory and honour and worship to Him our Saviour and Redeemer, who hath taught us when we pray to say, "Our Father which art in heaven."

## SERMON III.

## THE LORD'S PRAYER.

S. LUKE xi. 2.

Hallowed be Thy Name.

IN my last sermon, Christian Brethren, I considered the first words of the Lord's Prayer, which tell us whom we are to pray to, what relation He bears to us; which tell us also somewhat of His character, and of the disposition of mind which befits us in approaching Him. We have therefore been thus far taught "how to pray," that we have been as it were put into the posture of prayer; we have been brought into the presence of our Father who is in heaven, and have, I would hope, reverently bent our knees before His footstool, and with earnest hearts we are now to make our petitions to Him. What shall our petitions be?

I think that those, which occur first in the Lord's Prayer, are not such as we should have put first. They are not prayers for our friends, nor

for ourselves, they are not prayers for pardon of sin, nor for grace, nor for the Holy Spirit, nor for any other great boon which might perhaps first occur to our minds. And yet, though perhaps we should not ourselves have put those petitions first which our Lord has put first, I think that we may see the divine wisdom of the order in which the petitions stand: for this is the vice and fault of us all, not that we cannot admire what is beautiful and good when presented to us, but that we do not find out what is good for ourselves; we are prone, for instance, to conduct on low selfish motives, and yet we can admire deeds which are unselfish and heroic; and many a man who is niggardly himself acknowledges the excellence of his neighbour's liberality, and the vicious man frequently admires virtue though he does not practise it; and so in the present case, we, who should probably have arranged our petitions to God very differently from the way in which Christ has arranged them for us, may yet be able to see the beauty and perfect wisdom of His arrangement. And what is the leading feature of Christ's order of petitions? this—that the first of all is not a prayer for any personal blessing, nor even for a blessing of any kind in the usual sense of the word, but the first prayer is "Hallowed be Thy Name." That the Name of God



may be hallowed, and sanctified, and revered, and honoured, and loved, not only in the world but throughout creation, this is to be the Christian's first prayer. The honour of God's Name is to be the very uppermost thing in a Christian's heart, far beyond all personal considerations, and therefore this thing is to be cared for first, that God's Name be honoured, and that this may be so is to be his first prayer. One may look upon the Christian who has opened his address to God with the words "Our Father which art in heaven," as meditating upon the meaning of the words, and revolving in his mind what and how great He must be who inhabiteth eternity, and as being so filled with the thought of the majesty of God, that his own wants for the moment are forgotten; he thinks not of himself, but fixes all his thoughts on the great God who has condescended to permit him to approach His footstool; he feels overwhelmed and abashed, and yet he thinks that a tribute of praise will be received from one who has been encouraged to approach Him in prayer, and thus in the fulness of a humble and admiring heart he cries out "Hallowed be Thy Name."

He is the best man, the most holy man, the most christian man, who can use with the greatest earnestness these words. For he who would for-

sake sin and follow holiness, and who would avoid hell and obtain heaven, must have before his eyes something higher than his own advantage. To fear hell because it is everlasting burning, and love heaven because it is perfect peace, these are motives which may fairly influence men's minds to seek the one and avoid the other; but indeed, Christian Brethren, they are not the highest motives, they are the motives which stir the Christian heart in its childhood, rather than those which actuate it in maturer years. The great all-sufficient motive with the full-grown Christian man is the glory of God. The reason why he loves heaven is, because the glory of God is the only motive of every living creature who dwells there, because no one there thinks of honouring himself or advancing himself, but all cast their crowns down before the throne of God, and acknowledge that all blessing, and honour, and majesty, and dominion, and worship, are due to Him; His Name is hallowed there, and that is why it is heaven; there is no rebellion there, no name exalted and put in competition with His. And earth would be heaven if it were so here; the reason why there is sin and misery in the world is, because we have bowed down to another master and obeyed another name than His who made us, and the name of God is not

hallowed as it ought to be, men do not tremble before the Name of God as they ought, but they disregard it and do not hallow it, and so Satan and not God is in fact the Prince of this world. Hence then it is the highest wisdom, as it is the most Christian act, to pray first of all that the Name of God may be honoured, and hallowed in the hearts and lives of all men.

Let me say a few words more particularly in explanation of the text, "Hallowed be thy Name!" Let us think a little upon the Name of God. And first I will remind you, how that among the Jews so great was the reverence paid to His holy Name, that they did not venture to pronounce it with their lips. God called Himself by the name Jehovah; that was peculiarly the name under which He revealed Himself to the Jews, as you read in the Psalm, "Praise Him in His name Jehovah;" and God says Himself, speaking of the patriarchs, "By my name Jehovah was I not known unto them:" but the Jews dare not utter this name, and so when it occurred in their scriptures they put another name in its place, and called God *the Lord*. I do not say that they were right in this their scruple, it may be that they were needlessly strict in their notions of what was meant by honouring the Name of God; still their conduct points out to us the

extreme reverence which an intimate knowledge of God produces. God shewed Himself to the people on Mount Sinai, but they dared not look at Him, they trembled at His presence, and begged that Moses might receive commands from God for them: and in like manner, God revealed His Name to the same people, and they dared not use it; they thought the Name of God was too awful a word for human lips, they trembled lest by any means they should pollute that Name which ought to be hallowed.

And certainly, whether they were right or not in their particular mode of paying honour to the Name of God, one thing is certain, that the Name of God is spoken of in the Old Testament in a manner calculated to excite the very deepest awe, and the most intense fear of polluting it. Thus, by the prophet Ezekiel, God tells the Jews who came to inquire of Him, that He had borne with their fathers and brought them out of Egypt, and through the wilderness, and into the promised land, not for their own sake, but for the sake of His own holy *Name*: these are some of the words of the Lord to the prophet: "I said, I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish mine anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt; but I wrought for *My Name's sake*, that it should not be polluted before the heathen,

among whom they were:"\* here you see the salvation of the Israelites is said to be due not to themselves, but to God's jealousy for the honour of His *own holy Name*. And again, in the same chapter, God says that He would have destroyed them all in the wilderness for their wickedness and rebellion, but "I withdrew Mine hand, and wrought for *My Name's sake*, that it should not be polluted in the sight of the heathen, in whose sight I had brought them forth." And again in the same chapter we read, "Ye shall know that I am the Lord when I have wrought with you *for My Name's sake*, not according to your wicked ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O ye house of Israel, saith the Lord God." In these passages, you see how the honour of God's Name is made the rule of His treatment of a whole nation; they deserved no kindness at His hands, they were a rebellious people, but still He had said He would bring them into the land of Canaan, and the honour of His holy Name was at stake, and the heathen would think lightly of that Name, if they were allowed to see the downfall of that people whom God had pledged Himself to preserve, and *therefore* they were saved, *therefore* their sins did not prevail to their entire destruction. And as in

\* Ezek. xx. 8, 9.

the case of the Israelites so in all others, the honour of His own most holy Name is the end of all the works of God; thus the world was created for His glory, and as though to mark this, the earth was not a mere machine, nor even was it inhabited by living creatures who were little better than machines, but it was made the dwelling-place of man, man with his fine intelligence and wonderful endowments, and whose very office it appears to be, as distinguishing him by a quite infinite interval from the brutes, that he is able to utter the praises of God, and to hallow the Name of his Father who is in heaven. But here I must put in this word of caution: when we speak of God seeking in all His acts the glory of His own Name, we use terms which do not express the whole truth; when a man seeks his own glory he is contemptible, not worthy of admiration: but the mode in which a man seeks his own glory is not that in which the Almighty acts, we have no words which can properly express that; but this we know, that the honour of God is the end of us all, the end of creation, the occupation of heaven, and therefore we express at least a part of the truth, when we say that God has made all things for His own honour, and that the hallowing of His own Name is the end of all His works. Observe this asserted still

more forcibly in Ezekiel xxxvi. 22, where God says, "I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for Mine *holy Name's sake*, which ye have profaned among the heathen whither ye went. And I will sanctify *My great Name*, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord." Again, you may remark how that Almighty God has sometimes magnified His own Name by swearing by *it*, as though it were the greatest, the most holy thing by which to swear; thus Jerem. xlv. 26, "Behold I have sworn by *My great Name*, saith the Lord, that my Name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah." This is equivalent to other places in which we read of God swearing by Himself, as He did to Abraham at the sacrifice of Isaac, of which the Apostle says,\* "Because He could swear by no greater, He sware by *Himself*." So that you see the *Name* of God means God *Himself*; a name stands for a person, and to swear by the *Name* of God is to swear by God *Himself*; to take God's *Name* in vain, is to mock God *Himself*; and to blaspheme God's *Name*, is to blaspheme God *Himself*; and to hallow His Name, is to sanctify and glorify Him whose Name we hallow. But once

\* Heb. vi. 13.



more, the prophet Isaiah\* has words in accordance with those I have already given you, "For My Name's sake will I defer Mine anger, and for My praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off.....For *Mine own* sake, even for *Mine own* sake will I do it: for how should *My Name* be polluted? and My glory will I not give to another." Here again you see how the honour of God's *Name* is identified with His *own* honour, and also how that honour is made the directing spring of His dealings with men.

On the whole therefore I assert, and the passages I have read to you will bear out the assertion, that the great end of all things is the hallowing of the Name of God. God has done all that He has done for this end; when He created the world, He created it for His own honour and glory; when He made man, He gave Him a mind which might rise to Himself, and a heart to admire His goodness, and a tongue to tell forth His praise; when He redeemed His people out of Egypt, and led them through the wilderness, and bore with all their rebellion and hardness of heart, and brought them into the promised land, it was for His Name's sake that He did it, and because He would have His holy Name glorified among the heathen: and

\* Isa. xlviii. 9, 11.

when He redeemed mankind from sin, by sending His blessed Son our Lord into the world, still the honour of His Name was one great end to be attained; and so it was, that when our blessed Lord prayed in the days of His flesh, "Father, glorify Thy Name, there came a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it and will glorify it again."\* And as the glory of God is the guide of His own acts, so that same glory ought to be the end of all that His creatures do; whether they be angels or men, all who have the gift of an intelligent soul are bound to make the glory of God, or in the words of the text, "the hallowing of His Name," the end of all they do; and so St. Paul says, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." And in heaven they do all to the glory of God; there they have but one occupation, which is to praise Him; Cherubim and Seraphim, and Apostles, and Saints, and Martyrs, all join without one discordant voice in the hymn of praise, all hallow His holy Name. But on earth it is different, this is one of the grievous faults of our nature, that we seek not the glory of God, but our own; almost every one is thinking of his own reputation, and how he may advance himself, and how he may increase his own glory and be spoken

\* John xii. 28.

of well; so much so, that our Lord made it an argument for His own reality, that He did not seek His own glory, that He was seeking the glory of God, and therefore deserved to be listened to. Almost every one is seeking to glorify his own name, but few of us are glorifying as we might the Name of God. I do not wish to make things out to be worse than they are, things are bad enough without any exaggeration; but I think no one can deny that, as a general rule, the glory of God is not the end of human actions; far from this, I believe most persons who have thought much will say, that with very few indeed is the honour of God in any considerable degree the thing aimed at; self is the God of this world; as a general rule, each is honouring self and striving to advance self, in fact worshipping self; and men sometimes come to such a pass that they think it impossible to act from any other motive but self-love, they think that what we call virtue is only selfishness in disguise, that there cannot be such a thing as a disinterested action, and that those who appear to have some motive higher than self, are not really less selfish, but only more farsighted in their selfishness, than their fellows. Is not all this so? can it be denied? when men talk of their plans and their deeds, what do they themselves speak of as the main-

spring with them? surely *self*: on what principle do men argue questions of politics? is it not usually this, whether any proposed change will benefit or injure themselves? Yes, it is a painful fact, but a fact nevertheless, that self and not the glory of God is the root of the actions of almost all.

But we have, as you see, a protest against this mode of acting in our daily prayers: the very first thing we pray for in the Lord's Prayer is that God's Name may be hallowed, and therefore if we do not endeavour to hallow the Name of God we are hypocrites, we are saying one thing in our prayers and doing another thing in our lives. Why do we pray that God's Name may be hallowed, if we do not seek to hallow it? Why do we thus profess God's glory to be our rule, if it is not our rule of life? What can it be but an offense before God, that a man should kneel down and say, "Hallowed be Thy Name," and then be among the foremost to profane that Name, to despise that Name, to cast dishonour upon it? Christian Brethren, however painful it may be, you must consent to be tried by your prayers: it is out of the question that you should be allowed to use certain divine forms of prayer, and that they should be mere forms to you, repeated by rote without any wish to carry them out in prac-

tice; that Lord's Prayer, which has been given us in compassion to our infirmities, and to enable us to pray aright, will be a very millstone about our neck, and will sink us deep into hell, if we repeat its solemn words daily with our mouths, and never act out the spirit of them in our lives.

This being so, let us look into the matter a little, and see how a person ought to act, who wishes to live up to his prayer, that God's Name may be hallowed. I will endeavour to point out a few things in which this prayer ought to influence his life; it can be only a few, but you may fill up the sketch for yourselves. In the first place, I should say that a man does not hallow the Name of God, who does not speak of Him most reverently: I can scarcely suppose there is any one here who would actually blaspheme God, or use His Name in cursing and swearing; this is too shocking a profanation of the holy Name, to be supposed possible in those who come to worship Him in His temple; nevertheless this is one of the commonest modes of profaning God's Name, and he helps to hallow it who endeavours to prevent others from profaning it, who lets it be known that he will not stand by and hear profaneness without rebuking it, and whose presence therefore becomes a check upon men with profane tongues. And perhaps many of us might do

something in this way; it is soon known of what sort a man is, and whether loose talking is allowable in his presence or no; and he who thus, by his example and his influence, compels others to forbear from dishonouring God, does so far forth hallow His holy Name. But apart from this, a man who would hallow the Name of God must remember every time he takes the Name in his mouth what Name it is: indeed it is no common Name, but a Name awful and to be trembled at; and a fear of the Name of God will be a very practical principle in our lives, for we shall not be likely to offend Him whom we revere, and by word and action desire to honour. Again, the man who would hallow the Name of God, should be very diligent in publicly worshipping Him: he who is diligent in attending on the public worship of God thereby honours God Himself, and also protests against the conduct of those who honour Him not: and may not he who wishes to hallow the Name of God do something by his influence towards persuading others to hallow it? may not many of us have the opportunity of bringing a neighbour to praise the Name of God in this temple? indeed, Christian Brethren, it grieves me much that in this great parish we should not be able to find Christians enough to fill this house of God; and is it not possible, that those who

come here to hallow the Name of God, might be able by their private influence to induce others to come to the house of the Lord? He who keeps God's commandments, says our blessed Saviour, and teaches other men to keep them, is blessed; and in like manner, he who honours God himself is blessed, but thrice blessed is he who is able to make others honour Him too. Again, every man who wishes to do as he prays, should be careful to honour God in his household; the master of a house should hallow God's Name by daily gathering his family about him, and praising Him and making supplication before Him; he should hallow God's Name too by teaching his children to fear it, by bringing them up in the fear of it; he should make it his constant effort that God should be recognized as the Lord of that house, that His Name should be hallowed in *his* family, however it may be profaned in others. And still further, every man who would hallow the Name of God, should so manage his whole walk in life, so conduct himself in business, in his work, in whatever he has to do, that it may be clear to all men that the honour of God is the rule of his actions. A man may honour God in little things; for instance a man is making a bargain, then let him honour God in it, and be open and honest and noble because he has the fear of God before his eyes,



and because God seeth in secret, and because a paltry gain is of little importance, whereas it is of great, yea of infinite importance, that men should not blaspheme God, and say this man who pretends to fear God is no better a man than those who fear Him not: Christ our Lord said, you will remember, that His disciples ought so to act, that men should see their good works and glorify their Father which is in heaven.

But I must stop: there are ten thousand ways in which we may hallow the Name of God; indeed it has been my purpose to shew you that our very first aim in all things should be this, to glorify God and to hallow His Name; and there is no one who may not do something to make his life correspond to his prayers; and I do say that if we would be growing Christians, nay if we would be even honest and consistent, we must bethink ourselves what we mean by daily praying "Hallowed be Thy Name," and whether we are helping to hallow it. Shame, shame upon us that we do not glorify it more by our holy lives, by our charitable conduct, by our kindness to each other, by our sincere worship of God! shame upon us that our prayers should be so much better than our practice! that we should pray daily to be enabled to do all to God's glory, and yet should do so much to our own! aye, I say shame upon *us*, *us*

who are here present and who are professed servants of God: if any one is offended with the charge, I will not press it; all I will say is, that I have ever found that those who really glorify God most, are the most sensible of their not glorifying Him as they ought, and that those who live in the judgment of others most conformably with their prayers, are those who themselves see more than others their grievous short-coming, and can only say in defence of themselves, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

## SERMON IV.

### THE LORD'S PRAYER.

S. LUKE xi. 2.

Thy kingdom come.

THIS is the next petition in the Lord's Prayer after that which we considered last Sunday. The subject then was, you will remember, the hallowing of the Name of God. I pointed out to you how that God's Name ought to be hallowed, that the purpose of all His works was the praise and honour of His own Name, that the hallowing of that Name was the occupation of heaven, and that the hallowing of the *Name* of God was the hallowing of *Himself*; and I warned you of the danger of hypocrisy in praying that God's Name might be hallowed, if you did not endeavour to glorify His Name in your hearts and thoughts and words and actions. I now invite you to think about the next part of the Prayer, "Thy kingdom come." You will recollect that I pointed it

out as one remarkable feature of this prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ, that it does not begin with a prayer for any benefit either for ourselves or our neighbours, it does not even begin with a petition for pardon of sin, or grace to live well; on the other hand, it begins with a petition for something quite removed from our own interests properly speaking, with a petition which we perhaps should scarcely have thought of putting into our prayers at all, much less putting first, namely that the Name of God may be hallowed. Now the next petition is in the same strain, it breathes the same spirit; like the first, it also pleads for no boon for ourselves nor for our neighbours; in one sense indeed, this as all other petitions is for some benefit for ourselves, for it is for our happiness that the Name of God should be hallowed, and that His kingdom should come; but they are not direct obvious blessings, not those which would strike our minds as most to be desired of all, which would naturally well out from a full heart, as the things to be most earnestly asked for, whatever else were denied. I say that the petition which we are to consider in this sermon is of this kind; it requires a refined spiritual sense in any person to see clearly, that the coming of the kingdom of God is one principal thing to be prayed for, yea, to be prayed for before he asks for daily bread; yet

so it is, and I think that perhaps we may measure our approach to the stature of Christ by the earnestness with which we make such prayers as that of the text, by the warmth with which we beseech of God our Father that His kingdom may come.

Let us examine a little into the meaning of the petition: what is this kingdom, of which in the Lord's Prayer we pray that it may come?

You will remember that the first opening of the Gospel dispensation, was the preaching of the coming of the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God. John Baptist came preaching thus, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand:" this was the argument he gave for men leaving their sins and beginning a holier life, and he gave this explanation, "Now also the axe is laid to the root of the trees; therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire:" and thus he speaks of our Lord, as one coming after him, "Whose fan is in His hand, and He shall thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner, but burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." From which you may gather thus much at least, that the kingdom of heaven which S. John spoke of as being at hand, implied a great apparent change in God's government of the world, somewhat in

accordance with those words of S. Paul, who says, speaking of heathen times, "the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now He commandeth men everywhere to *repent*." I should conceive therefore that in one sense the kingdom of God came upon earth with the coming of Christ, because with His coming a new order of things in some measure began; God began to shew His power and to influence the world by His Spirit more than He had before; before Christ's coming Satan had been the almost universal lord of this world, so much so that our Saviour spoke of him as the *Prince* of this world, but our Lord came to shake his dominion, to redeem men from his power, and enable them to serve their rightful Master, even God; in token hereof our Lord cast out the devils which possessed men, for I conceive that we only see the full significance of those mysterious miracles, when we regard them as typical of the emancipation from the power of the devil which Christ came to effect for us all; and hence also on one occasion Christ said, "I beheld Satan like lightning fall from heaven;" meaning thereby, I think, that He had by His own mission thrown down Satan from his throne, and that from henceforth there was to be a new kingdom in the world. Now if any one ask, why it was that Satan was allowed to have such do-

minion in the world, I cannot answer, but it is sufficient for us that in the wisdom of God it was permitted so to be. And that it was so is evident; sin was universal, and sin of very gross kind, this was the mark of Satan's reign, and there was little light shining through the darkness except amongst the Jews, and even they had a light which rather glittered like the spark of a glow-worm, than guided and warmed like the sun. But Christ was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, and therefore when He came into the world, men were called upon to rouse themselves and shake off the yoke and repent and serve God, and they had the assurance that they would be able to revolt successfully, because God's Spirit was about to be poured out upon the world so as it never had been poured out before, and those, who would submit to the new king and rebel against the old, would find that they would have strength to carry them through. And moreover they must needs repent, because, as God was about to influence the world in a new and more powerful way, so was He about to judge the world in a more strict way; altogether His hand was about to be more visibly exerted in the world's affairs, and the requirements would be greater than they had been, and the spiritual aids also greater, and the judgment more severe.



Something of this kind may, I think, be intended by the kingdom of heaven, which was at hand when Christ our Lord commenced His ministry; but beside this, there is another, perhaps a more obvious meaning to be assigned to the words "the kingdom of God," namely, the progress of the church in the world. The kingdom of heaven in the gospels frequently stands for the church, as when it is compared to a net which gathered of every kind, and which when it was full they brought to shore, and gathered the good in vessels, but cast the bad away: here we have a symbol of the church spreading through the world, catching men of all sorts, not distinguishable here perhaps, but separable hereafter by the judgment of God. Again the kingdom of heaven was likened to a grain of mustard-seed, which though small waxes and grows until it becomes a tree: here is the church beginning with the Apostles, then spreading by little and little, embracing first one nation, then another, until it spread over the civilized world. And so of other parables which speak of the growth of the kingdom of heaven; and in matter of fact we have seen that the church has had this principle of growth, it has spread and flourished; men tried to oppose it but could not succeed, kings stood in its way and it crushed them; at length kings too

became Christians, and they assisted the growth of the church, as had been prophesied, that "kings should be its nursing fathers and queens its nursing mothers." And so the church has spread over the civilized world; to be civilized is to be Christian; and in this sense the reproach of the cross has ceased, that is, it is no longer a disgrace, but an honour to be called a Christian: when the Gospel was first preached, to call a man a Christian was to pour upon him the very deepest contempt, nay it was to bring him under the penalties of the law; but now it is different, the kingdom of God is in a measure come, that kingdom which Christ taught His disciples to pray for has already come so far as this, that among the most cultivated nations of the earth, God and His Christ are acknowledged, in word at least, to be the lawful sovereigns of mankind; every man glories in being supposed to belong to that kingdom, every man will resent the accusation of being not a Christian, however little his conduct may correspond to his profession. If you say that Christ is not really the king of the world, but another, I allow that there is enough to justify you in saying so, and on that account there is sufficient reason why we should still pray as of old, "Thy kingdom come;" there are indeed vast portions of the earth which are not even professedly members of the

kingdom, India for instance, our fellow-subjects, eighty millions and more, still acknowledging idols and false gods, and as yet not brought into the kingdom of Christ. And even where Christ nominally reigns, there is enough to make us doubt whether He be really King or no; in this country for instance there is much, very much which does not look like what one would expect in a country of which Christ is king; there is, comparatively speaking, very little true earnest religion, very little loving of others better than ourselves, and loving Christ more than all; the offense of the cross has in no wise really ceased, men are still ashamed of Christ, and to act as His servants, and to confess Him as their Lord; there are other gods in this Christian land, mainly perhaps there is that god Mammon, Mammon which on the testimony of Christ cannot be served as well as God, Mammon on the testimony of S. Paul the root of all evil; surely Mammon has a kingdom, and a very real kingdom in this land, and his subjects serve him in a way in which few of Christ's subjects serve their Master. And there are other gods who have part in Christ's kingdom here, and who have a strong hold on their subjects, the flesh, the devil, covetousness, pride, sloth, intemperance. But I think we need not go far for sad proof that Christ is not the only king in this country; is He so in this

parish? if He be a king, where is His honour? how is it that so few come to pay Him homage, and confess themselves His subjects, that so very very few enter into the strictest bond of obedience in the Eucharistic feast? I suppose that every person in this parish calls himself a Christian, but I say "shew me thy faith by thy works," and I remember also that Christ our Lord used these words, "*Many* shall say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord," to whom He will profess that He never knew them: and it were a melancholy thing to know, if we might know beforehand even as God now knoweth, how many of all those who now profess Christ to be their Lord, will be owned by Him as His at the last day! Alas, we must confess the truth, that in this parish, which yet is no worse than many others, Christ's kingdom is not fully come, there are others claiming dominion, and whoever is worshipped by the majority, certainly Christ is not.

But again, you will remember that Christ our Lord said to His disciples, when speaking of the coming of His own kingdom, "Neither shall ye say, Lo here! or Lo there! for behold the kingdom of God is within you!" by which I conceive Him to have intended this, that we are not to look for the kingdom of God as something to come visibly upon us from without, like the rising of the

sun which we can stand and gaze at, for that the coming of the kingdom of God is a work to go on in ourselves; the kingdom of God is no outward thing, but a dominion in man's soul, and the throne of God is no throne which men can behold with their eyes and wonder at, but it is the hearts of the faithful: wherever there are a large number of persons truly loving and fearing God, there is His kingdom come, and whenever a sinner leaves his wicked ways and repents and turns with true purpose of heart to the Lord, then is the kingdom of God extended. And therefore the kingdom of God is extended in a somewhat different way from other kingdoms; it comes not (as our Saviour said) with observation, it is quiet in its progress: our Lord compared it to leaven which a woman hid in three measures of meal, and which swelled and worked until the whole was leavened; or again, He compared it to a seed which a man sows, and he sleeps and rises day after day, and the seed springs up he knows not how; there is no sudden burst, no great victory such as those by which human conquerors have established their kingdoms in the world, but the gospel has been preached, and men have heard and have been convinced and have been baptized, and so the kingdom has come without observation, by one person after another and one nation after

another being quietly and gradually leavened. When therefore we talk of the kingdom of God coming, we must bear in mind the quiet way in which it progresses by obtaining influence over the hearts of men; we must remember, that in proportion as Christ obtains dominion in individual hearts, in that same proportion does His kingdom advance, and that if ever His kingdom be completely established on earth, it will be by no new miraculous exertion of power, but because the hearts of all have been leavened by the Holy Spirit, and the kingdom of God is come in the hearts of men. So that whatever else a man can do towards advancing the kingdom of God, at least he can do thus much, he can make sure that the kingdom of God is established in his own heart, that Christ is king there whatever he may be elsewhere, that the kingdom of God, so far as it is a kingdom within, is not hindered by *his* rebellion; he can cast out of his own heart all which exalts itself against the dominion of Christ, and offer himself up, body, soul, and spirit, as a willing subject.

But perhaps these last few words rather anticipate that which I have next to say to you. I have been speaking hitherto of the meaning of the kingdom of God and of its coming, and have been shewing you how that the kingdom of Christ is

already partially come, though not fully; and I have shewn you that there are two senses in which we may speak of the coming of the kingdom, the one referring to the advance of the Church in the world, and the other to the advance of religion in our own hearts; this last, however, being in a manner the condition of the former, because religion can only advance in the world by gaining possession of the hearts of individual men. And now I wish to say something of the conduct befitting those, who pray daily that God's kingdom may come: for do we really mean what we say when we pray thus? do we attach any meaning to the words, or are they idle words? do we consider what would be the effect of the coming of Christ's kingdom, and are we prepared to have our prayers answered, and are we endeavouring, so far as in us lies, to get them answered? Also, are we living as men should live, who daily pray for the coming of God's kingdom? for this is a very solemn thing to pray for, and we ought not to pray for it carelessly, without being quite sure that we wish to have our prayers answered. Let us look into this point a little.

A man who prays that the kingdom of God may come, prays, and if he prays, he ought from his heart to wish, that all men and all things may be governed by the laws of Christ, that every



thing contrary to the spirit of the Gospel may be banished from the world, that all bitterness, malice, evil-speaking, lying, slandering, may be utterly abolished, that all loving of pleasure rather than loving God may be a thing unknown, that all worship of Mammon, that is, pursuit of gain only for gain's sake, may cease, that the cross of Christ may be in reality the standard by which men measure all things else, that all things in this world may be judged of, not by any partial distorted standard of our own, but by rules such as Christ would approve. The coming of Christ's kingdom implies all this, and a man is not honest who prays for the coming of that kingdom and is not ready to accept such a result as this, as the answer to his prayers. I fear indeed it would be but an unsatisfactory answer, to many who say the Lord's Prayer; for there is many a man, who uses this prayer, and yet has his heart set upon quite different things from those which he there prays for; and indeed, Brethren, if any man be thus minded he had better not use the Lord's Prayer, he had better not ask for things which he would not wish to receive; for instance, if a man does not honour God, if he is an intemperate man, or a malicious man, or a proud man, or a deceitful man, or a covetous man, or if he has any qualities which can have no place in Christ's kingdom,

and if he does not earnestly desire to amend in all these respects, he had better not pray that God's kingdom may come; whatever we are we ought to be honest, consistent, and God will not deal half so severely with him who acts a part of consistent neglect of Himself, as with him who draws near to Him with his lips while his heart is far from Him.

So that you see, Christian Brethren, the prayer which you daily use imposes a certain line of conduct upon you: you pray that Christ may reign in the world, and you must therefore take care to live so that that reign, were it to begin tomorrow, would be a source of happiness to you; you must take care that your lives are such that when you say "Thy kingdom come," you may be able to think, bearing in mind what kind of change would be produced thereby in the world, that your highest happiness would be accomplished by a gracious answer to your prayers. And further I will say, that inasmuch as the kingdom of Christ cannot be established in the world until the heathen are brought into the Church, and all tongues confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, every one who desires the coming of the kingdom of Christ ought to do something according to his means, however small his means may be, towards sending ministers of the Gospel to those who sit in darkness. There

is not a more urgent appeal to our sympathy for the heathen world, than this daily prayer that we make, "Thy kingdom come;" for "how can they hear without a preacher, and how can they preach unless they be sent?" and therefore, though this application of the text does not belong so much to daily practice as some others, still it is too striking to be wholly passed by, and I say that every one who uses the Lord's Prayer and means what he says, ought to consider whether he is doing any thing, or as much as he might, towards the spreading the light of the Gospel, and so advancing the kingdom of Christ among those people, who have not yet heard of, and therefore have not yet submitted to, the dominion of Christ.

But now I come to a different and more ordinary application of the text. "Thy kingdom come!" thus you pray—well—the kingdom of God, Christian Brethren, is within you; the kingdom of God is in the heart of men, that is where He loves to rule, and the most simple, the most effectual, and the most certain mode of advancing the kingdom of God is to establish the kingdom of God in your own hearts: you can only in a very humble way help the progress of God's kingdom in the world, you may be able to do something, but you will do most by means of your example, by first giving up your own hearts to God, and becoming

yourselves true servants of Christ, and then you will shine as lights to attract others. And as I said in another part of this sermon, so I say here, that no one may with any honesty pray for the coming of God's kingdom in the world, who impedes its coming in that only place in which he has unlimited command, namely in his own heart; no one may pray in fact that his neighbours may be servants to Christ, when he is unwilling to serve Christ himself: yet this is precisely the self-contradictory character of the prayers of a man, who is not striving to live according to the will of God; such a man condemns himself; he prays for that which himself prevents from coming to pass; he prays that God's kingdom may come, and he, even he, is one great obstacle to the coming of the kingdom.

I pray you consider these things well, Christian Brethren; beware of that hollow, empty religion, which in such days as ours is likely to be very common, which will allow you to use words with your lips to which you give the lie with your lives; never venture to pray to God for any thing which you do not earnestly desire, and above all never pray to God for any blessing, which you yourselves by your conduct prevent the Almighty from bestowing. Indeed it would be a blessed thing, and this earth would be like heaven, if

God's kingdom were really come; but then we who desire this kingdom, must take care that we be not such that we should be declared traitors in it, and that the first act of God's sovereignty would be to free His kingdom from such as us; and we must be careful to see, that whatever may be the case in the world at large, the kingdom of God is not hindered in that little world that is within each of us, even in our own hearts.

Finally, Christian Brethren, the petition "Thy kingdom come" may perhaps convey the same prayer as that of the Burial service, "We beseech Thee that it would please Thee of Thy gracious goodness shortly to accomplish the number of Thy elect, and to hasten Thy kingdom, that we, with all Thy servants who have departed this life in the faith of Christ, may have our perfect consummation and bliss both in body and soul;" and thus our daily prayer brings before us the thought of those once near and dear to us, who have been taken away by God's hand, and now await in peace the end of the world, and the perfect establishment of the kingdom of Christ, when He shall reign in that new Jerusalem before His saints gloriously. And if we would see that day with joy, Christian Brethren, and be of the number of those who have departed in the true faith of Christ, "what manner of persons ought we to

be in all holy conversation and godliness!" If we are not holy and earnest and obedient, surely that throne which shall then be set will be no pleasing sight to us; but if we do indeed love God and Christ, and have washed our robes in His blood, and are daily living as we would wish to have lived when the awful day arrives, then in humble hope and yet with trembling, knowing how hardly even the righteous can be saved, we may say with joyous hearts, "Thy kingdom come!"

## SERMON V.

## THE LORD'S PRAYER.

S. LUKE xi. 2.

Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth!

IN speaking to you, Christian Brethren, on this text, I must, at the risk of appearing to dwell overmuch upon one topic, recall to your minds what I said about the two petitions of the Lord's Prayer, which employed our attention last Sunday and the Sunday before; indeed the remarks to which I refer seem to me so important, that I shall consider that I have dwelt very far from too much upon them, if I can by the grace of God impress them upon the hearts of only a few among you. You will observe then, that the petition, which I have just read, is of the same character as the two that went before it, in this respect, that it also is a prayer for no personal benefit, not a selfish prayer, not even a prayer for pardon of sins, nor a prayer for the welfare of others, but a



prayer that the will of God may be done. Here then we have no less than three petitions, the first three in a prayer which doubtless is the perfection, the model, the type of all prayers, and not one of them asks for a single thing in the catalogue of our ordinary wants. A man wants blessings both bodily and spiritual, he wants daily bread, he wants raiment, and he wants health and strength and kind friends, and these it is no sin to ask for; and beside these he wants pardon for sin, and a clean heart and a right spirit, and aid against the devil, and grace for the time to come, and all these likewise it is his privilege and duty to pray for, and one could not wonder if a man were to place such things as these first in his prayers; and doubtless very effectual fervent prayers may be made of such a kind, even as that prayer of the publican which obtained an answer of pardon and peace, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" but still, such are not the first things prayed for in our Lord's Prayer: "Hallowed be thy Name! Thy kingdom come! Thy will be done!" those are the three petitions which have the patent of precedence and lead in the rest. And I do say again, Christian Brethren, as I have said before, that it is an altogether divine and superhuman feature in the Lord's Prayer, this rising above ourselves and our own immediate interest, mounting as it were

on the wings of angels, and soaring above the atmosphere of the world, and getting out of the influence of its heavy downward force and its darkening, stupifying vapours, and entering heaven and bowing down before the throne of God, and making it our most earnest petition, that as His will is done there, so it may also be done in this lower world.

But now to consider the petition of the text: we pray that God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven; how *is* God's will done in heaven? I will mention to you several characteristics of the way in which God's will is done in heaven, in all which it would be well if we on earth imitated those who dwell there.

In the first place, God's will is in heaven done *willingly* or *heartily*; that is, His servants there obey Him and do His will, not because they are commanded to do this and that, and *dare* not disobey, but because they do not *wish* to disobey; it is their happiness to do God's will, it is because they do it that they are happy, and they would grieve if they might not do it; their will runs parallel with that of God, so to speak, it runs alongside of it and never crosses it, the two wills perfectly agree, they are to all intents and purposes one. And in this consists their happiness: strange as it may seem to us, they do not wish in anything

to gratify their own wills; strange as it may seem, there is in them no strife of principle and duty against self-gratification, there is none of that conflict which we know by such descriptions as that of "the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these two being contrary the one to the other;" we have as it were two powers trying to guide our course through the world, the one pulls one rein and the other the other, and the result is indecision, sometimes going in this direction and sometimes in that: or if there is unanimity in a man's heart, it is too often because the worse principle has got the mastery, and self has both reins, and drives without turning to right or left along that broad road, on which by our Saviour's testimony so many go, and which leads to destruction.

But there is none of this jar, and confusion, and serving of two masters in heaven; there Angels and Saints obey from the heart, and have no wish separate from the will of God; and if there be any command of God to be executed, there is no hanging back, no making of excuses, no pleading this reason and that why it cannot now be performed, but there are ready ministers and willing hearts, and each tries to be more active than the other, to be the first to obey. And yet some of the duties which they have to

perform are not such as to our gross perceptions would appear to be full of happiness; as, for instance, we read that the angels are "all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation;"\* and if they had hearts like ours, there could not but be sometimes a murmur of rebellion against the command to perform an office so low as that of ministering to the wants of sinful men; but those holy beings are free from all such feelings, and therefore to minister to God's saints, or to perform His vengeance on sinners, or in any way to do His bidding, is their highest pleasure, because it is the doing of His will; to perform their own wills, or rather to have any will except that of God's, would be their torment, and therefore they perform His will earnestly and heartily and with all their strength.

Again, God's will is done in heaven *completely, perfectly*; whatever is done is His will throughout, with no mixture of the will of any other; unlike earth, where the very best of things have generally, perhaps always, some mixture of evil. For instance, how seldom does any one do an action which is quite pure in its motive! How frequently does an action apparently good and virtuous betray, if examined, an evil root! I do

\* Heb. i. 14.

not say that we ought to look for the rotten sides of good works, quite the contrary is I believe our duty, but frequently the fact is too palpable to be unobserved; and at all events we may examine as narrowly as we please, and the more narrowly the better, into the nature of our own deeds; and if we do, we shall I fear discover that in many of our most seeming fair deeds there has been some failing point, some little self-applause, some little seeking of advantage to ourselves rather than God's glory, some narrow feeling mixed up with our charity, some root of bitterness shooting up and troubling us. This is the character of all this world's excellence, it is partial, spotted with evil; the Saints of God on earth have none of them been perfect; Moses might not enter the promised land because he had once forgotten himself, Aaron was mixed up with idolatry, David fell, Solomon apostatized for a time at least, Hezekiah was carried away by vanity, Elijah was impatient, Eli neglected his duty in one very important matter; and in the New Testament, S. Peter the chief of the Apostles denied his Lord, and even after the Church had been illuminated with the Holy Spirit, S. Peter was taken to task by S. Paul for dissimulation, and Barnabas and Paul disputed so sharply, that they were obliged to part company and pursue each his own way.

Such is the character of this world's good, it is imperfect, mixed with evil, the devil is ever active, and he throws in bad seed and mixes the crop: but things are different in that place from which Satan has been expelled, and where there is no power antagonist to that of God; there obedience is not only willing but complete, there is no partial service, but the hearts of those in heaven beat in perfect unison with the mind of God, and there is no single jarring thought, or rebellious feeling.

Once more, the doing of the will of God in heaven is not only *willing* and *complete*, but it is *universal*; there is no division between those who serve God and those who serve Him not, because *all* serve Him; those who do not serve Him do not belong to Him, but to the devil, and they are in another place; but those who are in heaven are of one voice and one mind, every one serves God and praises Him, and that is why our daily morning hymn represents Cherubim and Seraphim, and Apostles, and Prophets, and Martyrs, as all joining in one jubilant expression of praise to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. How different this from what we see here! How false would it be to say, that all men here were serving the same Master and acting on the same principles! There are two kings in the world, and they have each their subjects, God knows which

has most, though I fear, that even we can pretty certainly guess. I spoke last Sunday of that other king, whose kingdom is already come with such power, and who is the prince of this world, and whom so many men obey: if any one doubts which king has most subjects, let him, as a kind of rough mode of calculation, compare the number of persons in this parish who come to church with the number who stay away; I do not say that those are all true servants of God who come here, neither do I positively assert that there are none of His servants who stay away, but at least the proportion of persons who come regularly to church may be taken as some measure, and I think a very favourable measure, of the extent to which God's will is the will of the parish; taking this test then, I say, let any one apply it to this parish, and then say who has most people in this place, God or the devil! I should judge from the number of our ordinary congregations, that there are very very many who are not in the habit of coming here, many I fear are like the guests in the parable, who were invited to a feast, and who began with one consent to make excuse. Would to God that we could see the number of earnest worshippers of Him daily and weekly increase! I do not see why this church should not be full to overflowing, every time that divine service is



performed with zealous worshippers anxious to fall low on their knees before the footstool of God. At present things are different enough from heaven; there every one does God's will, here, with the exception of a few, every one does his own; there every one worships God, here men think it an effort and a fatigue to attend His courts, and few, comparatively speaking, attend them at all, and the rest—what are they doing? they too are worshipping—they too are obeying a god—they too are following the wishes of their master—they too are doing the will of—whom? alas they will find out one day, when the time of retribution is come.

Christian Brethren, I have spoken plainly on this matter, because it is one which will not bear any varnish or colour; and I say that in all the particulars which I have mentioned, earth is hugely unlike heaven, and God's will is not done here as it is there, and there is abundant reason for us to pray that "God's will may be done as in heaven, so in earth."

Now what do we mean by this prayer, or what ought we to mean by it? The answer to this will be easy from what I have already said: for taking it only in this point of view, that we desire earth to be as happy a place as heaven, we have need thus to pray. For why is heaven happy,

and earth miserable? because there God's will is done, and here men do their own: the great curse of the world, the curse of all curses, which spreads like a rank weed over the whole face of the earth and deforms every part of it, is selfishness; it is because every one seeks his own and not another's advantage, and his own honour and not that of God, that there is so little peace and happiness in this world. Every one who thinks must see that this is the case; if every one looked to the welfare of his brother before his own, where would lawsuits, and quarrels, and slanderous reports, and malice, and envy, have place? and what would become of unkindness, and heart-burnings, and division of families? and if every one had the honour of God at heart rather than self-gratification, what would become of profaneness, and drunkenness, and pride? These things are they which make the world miserable; it is not mere poverty, or mere loss of dear friends, or mere affliction, which are the causes of the sharpest pains in this world, but it is unkindness from others and evil passions within, which are far oftener the real causes of misery. And the true cure of the ills of the world is for every man to leave off doing his own will and to do the will of God, and every one who wishes to see peace on earth and happiness such as there is in heaven,

should pray earnestly that men may leave off from doing their own wills and strive to do that of God.

But apart from the thought of the happiness of the world, a man may well consider that in doing God's will he is doing the very thing for which he was created. Man was never intended to do as he would: why was a law given to Adam and Eve except for this purpose, to shew them that they were not made to do their own wills? Here is the very greatness of man's nature, that he is able to feel that there is a higher will than his own, and that he sinks himself below his rank in creation when he allows his own will to be his law; and a man who prays that God's will may be done prays that men may really live like men, that the seed of better things which is in them may by God's grace grow and flourish and expand, and that earth may be the place it would have been if Adam had never sinned, and that every one may be like our Lord Jesus Christ, who came, as He said Himself, "not to do His own will, but the will of Him who sent Him."

And having spoken of the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, let me call to your minds, Christian Brethren, the remarkable manner in which He illustrated for us the use of this His own prayer. You will remember how that in the garden of Gethsemane, He endured such conflict

as none else ever endured; He sweated great drops of blood, He was in a very agony, for He saw before Him the bitter cup which He had to drink, He saw the cross, and the vinegar, and the gall, and the crown of thorns, and the insult and evil treatment, and above all He saw before Him that mysterious hiding of His Father's face which drew from Him those words, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" He saw all this before Him, and His human feelings shrank, and He feared to undertake the last work of His mission, and He prayed that if it were possible the cup might pass from Him, but then He added in the spirit of divine self-sacrifice, "nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done." Now here you have an altogether superhuman example of what is meant by the prayer of the text, here you see Christ our Lord shrinking from those pains which His divine foreknowledge shewed Him as about to be inflicted, and which His human nature rendered terrible to Him; that was a cup such as no other man ever drank of, a cup of such bitterness that we, with our gross perceptions, can scarce form a judgment of its extreme bitterness, it was a trial such as no other was ever submitted to, that of resisting the suggestions of flesh and blood, and submitting patiently to the will of God. But our Saviour murmured not, His meat and drink was to

do God's will, it was the very profession of His life, that which stamped His life as different from that of all us the rest, that His will was at one with His Father's, and that what God wished He wished likewise: and here the matter came to the test, here in the last conflict, when our Saviour's human nature shrank from the bitter cup, we have a clear and striking proof of the complete submission to His Father's will, which His life had all throughout exhibited; He would not pray unconditionally for the removal of the cup, but only if it were consistent with His Father's will, yea, in His agony He prayed that God's will might be done, although He knew that the fulfilment of His prayer would be the buffeting and spitting, and the crown of thorns, and the cross.

Hence then you see that the prayer, "Thy will be done," implies a complete surrender of self to the will of God, a desire to do the will of God, and that the will of God may be done whatever it may cost ourselves, a desire that the honour of God and not self may be the rule of action of all men, ourselves included, that the idols which now are worshipped and which are all in some way images of that great world-idol Self, may be utterly abolished, and that in place of them one God only may be worshipped, and that all (ourselves among them) may think nothing good and

great but what tends to His glory, nothing contemptible and mean but what opposes His will and is displeasing in His sight.

Such is the nature of your prayer, Christian Brethren, when you use the words of the text, "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth." And now I will say on this subject, as I said last Sunday, that you must consent to be judged by your prayers: you must not pray that God's will may be done, unless you really wish it to be done and are striving to do it; it is a mockery of the privilege of prayer, to pray that God's will may be done, and to do our own. So did not our Lord Jesus Christ; His life was a comment upon His prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, for it was palpable to all men, even to His enemies, that He was not doing His own will or seeking His own glory; there was small appearance of self-seeking in His most divine life; whether right or wrong, it was clear that He ever walked by a rule which was not self, and that He referred things to a standard to which ordinary men referred them not. And that is what is so beautiful in His life; it is the story of one who loved not Himself and honoured not Himself, but loved us poor sinners His brethren, and honoured God His Father. But it is of no use to admire what is beautiful in the life of

Christ, unless we desire in some measure to follow in His steps, and a man who does not desire to follow in His steps cannot say from his heart, "Thy will be done." Take an example: a man is unkind to his family, selfish in squandering on himself what should have been for his children, or a man is passionate or revengeful, or a man is proud and self-conceited, or he has some disease or another which shews that self is still his god, and that he has not yet been healed; now how can such a person as this say "Thy will be done"? how can he without profaneness pray for that to be done, which he does not himself?

Indeed, Christian Brethren, it is an awful thing to make void our prayers by our practice; it is an awful thing to pray for the doing of God's will and not to do it; this is of the nature of hypocrisy, which is such a foul disease, and which, when once it lays hold on the soul, fixes upon it with deadly effect, and paralyzes it, and leaves it bedridden and helpless. And though we may tremble at such a result, yet doubtless it is a very possible and even a very common thing, that men should get into the way of using familiar forms even to Almighty God, and forget what they involve; and thus sometimes men use the prayer of the text daily, and yet you would not guess from their lives that the doing of any will beside



their own had ever entered their minds. Whatever you do, Christian Brethren, avoid this: if you do not wish God's will to be done, and would rather do your own, and do not feel that to do your own will is misery, and to do God's will happiness, and that it is your very curse and wickedness that you do so frequently allow self to govern your actions, then in God's Name do not pray that His will may be done! do not give to God that mere lip-service which He hates, and refuse Him that in which He delights, the obedience of a willing heart.

But I would fain believe better things of you, Christian Brethren, though I have spoken thus; I would fain believe that to many of you the still-remaining dominion of self is a sore burden and trouble, and that you not only see the beauty of obedience to God's will, but are willing with all your hearts to give yourselves up to the doing of it. Therefore I would say to you, in conclusion, these few words of comfort and exhortation: My Christian Brethren, if you really desire to do God's will, He will enable you to do it; there is no situation in life in which you may not do His will: in the ordinary path of life, in that life of labour to which God has appointed us all, there are abundant opportunities of putting in practice this rule, of doing God's will and not our own, except

so far as our own agrees with His; and though it may be difficult to expel all selfish feelings and all rebellious wishes, yet constant efforts will be blessed, and we shall "*grow* in grace." And the troubles of life, of which many of you have had an abundant share, and all of us perhaps have tasted in some degree, afford good opportunity for shewing the reality of your prayer, that God's will may be done, in your patience and submission. Yea, it is possible for a poor afflicted bedridden servant of God, who has scarce strength to move or turn, by quiet submission, by simple passive bowing to the pleasure of God, to preach such a sermon on the text "Thy will be done," as should not be very easily expressible in words, however pointed and however eloquent. Therefore, Christian Brethren, faint not in doing God's will, nor in praying that it may be done, nor in illustrating your prayer by both doing and submitting to the will of God. And never forget that which it is much for your comfort that you should remember, that the knowledge of Christ and His doctrine was promised by Christ our Lord Himself, not to the learned, nor to those of warm feelings whose religious emotions are strong, nor to those of a voluble tongue who are able to talk much concerning their faith, but to those who will *do* God's will.

## SERMON VI.

### THE LORD'S PRAYER.

S. LUKE xi. 3.

Give us day by day our daily bread.

HITHERTO, Christian Brethren, we have been engaged in considering petitions such as angels might join with us in offering up to Almighty God, nay which doubtless are substantially the same as those which are ever being offered up by the Heavenly Host to Him who sits upon the throne. "Hallowed be Thy Name! Thy kingdom come! Thy will be done!" these are petitions not simply human, they are the fit utterances of any spirit, whether human or angelic, which has laid hold on this great truth, that the glory of God and the doing of His will are the very end of creation, that if His Name is not hallowed, and any other king rule beside Him, and the will of another be done instead of His, then creation had much better have never

been, and the word by which all things have been called into existence has been spoken in vain.

This evening, however, we leave our heavenly company and address God alone; we ask for bread, for that which our nature renders necessary to us, though it is not required by them: this is a strictly human prayer, one which the wants of our nature prompt us to make, though perhaps, if left to ourselves, we should for the most part have made it in somewhat different terms. The point therefore to consider in the petition which forms the text, is not so much the petition itself as the way in which it is made: in the former portions of the Prayer you will remember that I pointed out that such requests as that God's Name might be hallowed, and His kingdom come, and His will be done, were not likely to have suggested themselves to most men, or at least that they certainly would not have been likely to gain so prominent a place; but observations of this kind cannot of course apply to a prayer for daily bread; every one knows he wants that; if a man pray at all, he is, I should think, quite certain to pray for that; just as you find that the sick people in the time of our Saviour were ready enough to apply for healing, they knew the wants of their bodies right well, and required no teaching to make

them ask for bodily benefits. Hence therefore I say, that there is nothing remarkable in the fact of the Lord's Prayer containing a petition for the supply of bodily wants; all that can be noticeable is the manner in which the petition is made.

But before proceeding to remark on these features, let me say one word about the difference between the words of the petition, as recorded by S. Luke and by S. Matthew. S. Luke has it in the way in which I have read it to you, "Give us *day by day* our daily bread;" while S. Matthew has it thus, "Give us *this* day our daily bread." All I would say on this difference is, that it seems to exist more in words than in reality; for the spirit of the prayer, according to either way of reading it, is that of praying for just what we want and no more. According to S. Matthew we seem to pray for to-day's bread, leaving the morrow to take care of the things of itself, and not asking for bread for the next day, because we know not whether we shall be alive and requiring it. According to S. Luke we seem to pray for bread in case we require it, to pray that whenever we want we may be supplied, and that as our needs come round day by day, so day by day the gift of food convenient for us may be supplied. Thus the spirit of the two

is the same; according to both we ask for what we want, we ask for no more: and therefore I think it is a matter of no importance, which form we adopt; if we do but get the spirit of the prayer into our hearts, we shall mean the same thing whichever we use.

But now to speak of the meaning of the text. I would say in general that dependence, and not independence, is the true condition of man; dependence upon God for all things, things bodily, things spiritual. Men are not very ready in general to allow this, at least are not ready to recognise it in the only way which is of any value, that is, in their practice, in their every-day life. You may remember how S. James\* takes the men of his day to task, for making their plans without reference to God's will, and without remembering their dependence upon Him; and what the Apostle said to people of his time is just as applicable to people now, because that same nature which was in man then is in him now; men are ever ready to make their plans and their schemes, as boldly as though they were masters of their own lives, and as though they lived by some inward independent energy of their own, and did not draw their breath and move their limbs, and

\* S. James, iv. 13—15.

eat and drink, and lie down and rise up again, by the power of God. Yet, Christian Brethren, this is very foolish, because it requires little thought to assure us that we have no life in ourselves, no strength in ourselves, but that all we are and all we have comes from God. I know of no truth more deeply laid at the foundation both of religion and philosophy, than that which S. Paul impressed upon the people of Athens, that "in God we live and move and have our being;" for he who has grasped this great truth has gone far towards unfixing himself from the little centre of self, and putting God in the place of self. He in whom we live and move is surely He whom we ought to serve; the will of Him who is thus our true life is surely the will which ought to guide our actions, rather than that selfish perverse will, which in so many things runs counter to that of God. Wherefore I say it is neither religious nor wise to forget our true position with respect to God, to act as though we were our own creators or our own preservers, as though we were able to say, I will do this or that without the will and power of God.

Nevertheless it is evident that men in general do not like to confess their true condition; there is a self-seeking, self-honouring spirit in us all, which is gratified by independence of Almighty



God. And moreover men do not like to see their true state, because they see that to confess it is to acknowledge the obligation which lies upon them to act in agreement with their confession: what I mean is, that a man who confesses his utter dependence upon God, confesses thereby that he ought to serve God, and love God and not himself; and men do not like this; they do not, as the Scripture has it, "like to retain God in their knowledge," and so they try to forget their dependence, and make themselves believe that they have power of themselves to help themselves.

And this is no new disease which has only shewn itself in modern times; it has been so from the first; it was this which was the secret of Adam's sin, this wish to throw off dependence upon God, and to be a god to himself. Eve was not contented with the position assigned her; she saw that the fruit of the tree was to be desired to make one wise, and so she eat. Here was exhibited as in a picture the way of all mankind; they all, like Eve, are discontented with the humble dependent position assigned them by God; they want to be gods themselves, and therefore they rebel. But man must be taught a different lesson, he must learn how poor and small and weak he is before God, how incapable he is of doing any thing of himself, and how much therefore he

needs at every moment the power of God, to support and strengthen him both in body and soul. That is why we are tried in this world as we are; that is why health and food and happiness are made so uncertain, namely to teach us the source of our blessings, and who it is that giveth us daily bread.

You will remember how the same lesson was taught the children of Israel, how they were led through the wilderness for forty years, and guarded from dangers which seemed sure to overwhelm them, and fed with bread from heaven, and made victorious over enemies far mightier than themselves; and all this to prove them and try them, and to teach them the lesson that "man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God," which means, in other words, that man does not live by his own strength, but by a strength not his own, which is daily supplied to him by his Father in heaven.

The Israelites found it hard to learn this lesson, they were ever rebelling against God and following their own wishes, but there has been one example given us of the lesson being well learnt. Our blessed Saviour was, as you know, tempted of Satan even as Eve was; Satan wished to persuade Him, as he had persuaded Eve, to throw

off dependence upon God; but our Lord silenced the tempter with those words of holy Scripture which I have just read to you, "Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God," and therefore our Lord refused to obtain His daily bread in any other way than as given Him by His Father; complete dependence upon Him was of far more consequence than a supply of daily bread.

And now observe, Christian Brethren, how the lesson of which I have spoken is conveyed and enforced by the petition of the text, "Give us day by day our daily bread." The spirit of these words is that of entire dependence upon God; they acknowledge the source from which all things come to us, for if even our daily bread is a gift of God, much more must all other blessings which are not so common as daily bread; and they acknowledge this also, that our dependence is from day to day, that is, constantly; that the gifts of today are no guarantee for the gifts of tomorrow, but that we must be daily askers if we would daily have. You will see therefore, that there is something in the petition of the text much more than a mere petition for food; it acknowledges a principle, it asks in spirit not for bread only, but for all bodily necessities; all that we want from day to day for the support and health of our bodies we

may consider as prayed for in the words "Give us daily bread." But it was not our Lord's intention to enumerate everything that was to be prayed for; the Church could expand the prayer for herself, when she had once been taught "how to pray," and we find that this has been done. In the litany we have a number of things enumerated, which are necessary for the body and which are asked for by name; but our Lord wished to be brief, He wished rather to answer the question *how* are we to pray, than *what* are we to pray *for*, and therefore He summed up all petitions in this one, "Give us this day our daily bread," not meaning that we are to pray for nothing except daily bread, but contrariwise, that we are to pray for all temporal benefits in the same spirit as for that.

Observe moreover that the prayer is for *bread*, not for luxuries and wealth, but for the simple gift of bread: a great lesson of contentment is here; many are dissatisfied if they have not much more than the mere supply of necessities; and if God gives us more, we ought to receive His gift thankfully; but our Lord has not encouraged us to ask for such things, He bids us ask for necessary food, but He does not tell us to ask for more; and He Himself set us the example of not having more Himself; He Himself was a poor man, with no

pillow sometimes for His head, and He has shewn us that such a condition is one which no man need be ashamed to occupy ; He had all that man need have, raiment to put on and daily bread. Wherefore let any man, who has the same provision made for him, as was made for Christ in the days of His flesh, think himself happy ; let him not complain that he has not more, but take thankfully what he has, and remember that it is not the abundance of the things which a man hath in which his life consists, that it is not wealth and prosperity which make a man pleasing to God, but a humble and contrite heart. Our blessed Saviour uniformly speaks of wealth as a thing dangerous to the possessors, as a thing in the way of a man's happiness rather than as promoting it ; and if it be so, why should we pray for it ? no, Brethren, pray for that which Christ our Lord was content with Himself, and which He taught you to pray for, pray for daily bread.

And I will say here, that if you would enjoy the blessing of daily bread which God gives you, you will do so best by receiving it and recognizing it as a gift from God. Two men go out to their labour until the evening ; one reckless of God his Maker, and labouring because he knows he must work or starve ; the other goes out, after raising the prayer, " Give us this day our daily bread," to

obtain an answer to his prayers in the sweat of his brow, and he toils because that is the way in which it pleases God to give him his daily bread, and he bears in mind who is the giver of it, and he takes it as bread sent to him from heaven, and eats it with thankfulness. Which man will have most enjoyment of God's blessings? I think this last; for indeed, Christian Brethren, we miss much of the happiness which may still be had in this world, because we are self-sufficient, and think we are indebted to ourselves for the supply of our wants, and not to God. Daily labour is hallowed, by being the means of supplying that for which we pray; and it is a great thing for us thus to connect our daily work with our prayers; the prayers which a man has offered up before commencing his task of toil in the morning, will shoot a ray of light through the occupations of the day, and tinge them with a glory which nothing else can give. And I would wish you thus to connect your daily life with your prayers; your prayers should be the life of your life, and your actions should be a comment upon your prayers. A man who would enjoy this life, in the way in which it was intended to be enjoyed, ought to look upon it in the spirit of the prayer "Give us day by day our daily bread;" as a pensioner on God's mercy from day to day and from hour to hour, he will

eat his bread with thankfulness, and will recognize in all mercies vouchsafed to him the hand of Him who gives him daily bread, and he will not live as a man separate from God, but as one bound to Him by very near ties. Strive thus to live; ever as you eat your daily bread, remember the giver of it, and let your labour for it be sanctified by the prayer which you have offered, that God would be pleased to give it you. Wealth is not happiness, ease is not happiness; but to receive daily bread from the hands of God, and to know whence it comes, and feel grateful to Him who sends it, this is happiness, so far as happiness can be of this world.

What lessons, then, do we learn from the prayer of the text? I should say that, in the first place, we learn a lesson of reliance on God's providence. If it had pleased God, the course of this world might have been otherwise, the obtaining supplies for the needs of our bodies might have been made a matter of no doubt, a quite easy simple thing. Why was it not so? why was daily bread left as a thing to be daily prayed for? why was the supply of the body allowed to be dependent upon uncertain sources? I think the reason was, that God would teach man his true position, which is one of dependence, not of independence. It is man's ruin to fancy himself independent, and that



he can help himself and is everything to himself, and the words of the text protest against self-sufficiency; they say, you cannot obtain even daily bread for yourself, it is God that gives it to you; you must daily pray for it, even as you daily labour for it. You must not trust in your strength; you say you earn your bread for yourself, but who gives you strength to labour for it? in this, as in much higher things, "it is God that worketh in you;" a breath from Him and your strength may be laid low, and who will give you your bread then? And, moreover, even though you have daily bread, you want health and strength to eat it with gladness; who gives you health, and strength, and all things richly to enjoy? I say, therefore, that a prayer for daily bread is a prayer for strength to work for it, and the blessing of God upon your work that you may obtain it, and the blessing of God still after that upon the bread itself, that it may nourish and sustain you. He who prays for daily bread prays for all this, and confesses himself a creature dependent upon God, and owns the ruling of God's providence, and himself a pensioner upon it. And this is the spirit which Christ our Lord wished to instil into His servants; He assured us that God cares for us, that He cares for the sparrows who die and are no more, and therefore much rather cares for us

who are so much more valuable than them; He wished us to feel ourselves here as in the house of our Father, with a kind providence over us ruling all things for our good, if we do but love and trust in Him; and this is a dreary world without some such light upon it as this which our Lord has given, a cold dreary world with few to care for us, and with much unkindness to meet with, and many hardships to endure; but it brightens up, it appears all radiant with a heavenly glory, if we can but see above us the hand which governs all things and which gives us our daily bread.

Again, the prayer of the text is a lesson on Christian simplicity; it points out to us the sort of spirit, which becomes those who follow a lowly master. "Having food and raiment," says the Apostle, "let us be therewith content." We pray for *bread*, and bread only according to our wants; what a protest is here against the spirit of the world, the spirit of ever getting and never being contented; the spirit which does not belong to Christ and ought not to belong to His people. And he who prays as in the text, ought to act in the same spirit; striving after wealth among the rich, and grumbling with their lot among the poor, these things ought not to be. And since there is, I know, great temptation to be not alto-

gether satisfied with what God has given, I would say this, my poor Christian Brethren, "the life is more than meat, and the body than raiment;" God might have given you wealth had He seen it to be good; but indeed He does not love you a whit less, than if He had given you wealth; it is the soul that He has given you, which makes you valuable in His eyes, and that may well be rich with all the fulness of God, while your worldly circumstances are mean and poor. It is the peculiar mark of the Gospel, the mark which stamps it as a divine revelation, that it does not address itself to the learned and wealthy in particular, but if to any more than others, to the poor. And the prayer of the text is altogether in harmony with this character; it is just such a petition, as we should have expected from one who was poor and meek and lowly, as was our Lord Jesus Christ. I pray you, Brethren, as you use His words, so to use His example, and to shew that as you only ask for daily bread, so you are content with daily bread, if it please God to give you no more of this world's good than the name daily bread implies.

Once more, I think the words of the text read us a lesson on the gratitude which is due to God for all His manifold favours to us. For if we pray for daily bread for the time to come, doubtless we must in our hearts give thanks for what we have

already received: and indeed, thankfulness is a great mark of true earnest religion; you will remember how, in the Psalms, David continually expresses his thanks for mercies received, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all the benefits which He hath shewed me?" "To Thee, O Lord, do we give thanks, yea even unto Thee do we give thanks." And how much have we all to thank Him for! Him who has created us and preserved us, to Whom we owe all that we have of this world's happiness, and all that we expect in the next! It is one of the attributes of man, and a noble attribute it is, that he can recognize the hand from which all good things come to him, and can feel thankful for kindness shewed to him; yea that he has a voice, wherewith he is able to sing the praises of God, and return in the midst of the congregation of the faithful thanks for favours received.

In conclusion, Christian Brethren, I would say this: men are anxious enough to obtain daily bread, even as those men were in the time of our Lord, who, having seen the miracle of the loaves and fishes, sought Him again, not because they had seen the miracle, but because they had eaten of the loaves and were filled: what said our Lord to them? "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which the Son of Man shall

give you." And so I would say with regard to daily bread; pray for it, labour for it, be thankful for it; but ten thousand times more pray for, labour for, and be thankful for, the bread of eternal life. Indeed it is lamentable to see, how much more the food of the body is desired than the food of the soul; it is lamentable to see, how that, while men feed their bodies, they are frequently content to starve their souls. Let it not be so with you, Christian Brethren; strive earnestly to feed your souls, labour for that, be earnest for that; when you use the words "Give us this day our daily bread," think how incapable the mere bread of this world is of feeding your souls to immortality, and how lamentably poor, how poor beyond any beggary which words can describe, you must be, if having bread to eat and raiment to put on, you have no food for your souls and no covering to hide you from the wrath of God.

But the sublimest meaning is given to the words "daily bread," when we remember the words of our Saviour in reply to those who said "Lord, evermore give us this bread;" "I," said the Saviour,\* "am the bread of life," and "the bread is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world," "My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed." And I believe, Christian

\* S. John vi.

Brethren, that the deepest and most heavenly answer, which God can give to the prayer "Give us this day our daily bread," is when He gives you grace to come to His holy Table, and there, with faith and love and thanksgiving, to receive that bread of life which comes down from heaven, that medicine for sin, that food of immortality, even the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## SERMON VII.

### THE LORD'S PRAYER.

S. LUKE xi. 4.

Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.

I HAVE to speak to you in this sermon, Christian Brethren, on a most important subject, a subject which lies, so to speak, at the very root of your spiritual existence, which relates to your condition before God, to your nature as it is seen by Him. The Lord's Prayer, you will observe, does not say, forgive us our sins if we have committed any, it does not seem to entertain a doubt about *that*; it asks for forgiveness of sin in as general terms as it asks for daily bread, it supposes that we all want daily bread because we are made all of the same stuff, of flesh and blood, it assumes that we all want forgiveness of sins for the same reason. If then any one of you has committed no sins, feels that if the books were



now opened, as they one day will be, there would be nothing in them against him, if his conscience does not accuse him of any act or thought or word which has displeased God, nay, I might almost say, if his conscience does not daily accuse him of some good thing left undone or some bad thing done, if in fact a man does not feel that the law of God has any hold on him as a transgressor, then such a man cannot use the Lord's Prayer, it is as unfit for him as for an angel. But why unfit for an angel? because it contains prayers for the supply of wants which angels have not; angels do not require daily bread, and therefore the Lord's Prayer is not made for them; and, in like manner, any man who has not sinned cannot require forgiveness of sins, and therefore the Lord's Prayer is not made for him. But doubtless there can be no such person; our blessed Lord, who knew what was in man, bid us pray for forgiveness of sins, bid all of us pray, not only those who have committed grievous sins, murder, theft, adultery, but all of us, those who strive to serve Him the most, those who are most saintly in their lives, those who realise most that character, which Christ ascribed to His disciples, of being lights in the world. Wherefore, if for no other reason than this, that our Saviour has bid us all pray for the forgiveness of our sins, I should deem it

a safe assumption that we all have sins to be forgiven: but I do not think, that any one who knows what sin is, and who has any knowledge of himself and his own heart, will need proof, beyond that which his own conscience supplies, that whatever may be the case with others whom it is not for him to judge, beyond doubt *he* has very grievously sinned against God: any one who has looked honestly into his own life will, I believe, allow that the prayer for forgiveness of sins comes home to him quite as readily, as a prayer suited to his needs, as the prayer for daily bread; he will feel that continual pardon from Almighty God is as much a want of his soul, as bread is of his body; that as his body must perish, unless his heavenly Father grant the prayer for daily bread, so his spirit must starve and die, unless the same heavenly Father graciously sustain it by a supply of the first great spiritual need, the forgiveness of sins.

In order that we may see a little more clearly into the nature of the boon, which we ask in the words of the text, let us examine into the nature of sin. We pray for the forgiveness of sins, let us then see what sin is; doubtless you all know what sin is by examples of it, murder is a sin, drunkenness is a sin, lying is a sin, slander is a sin, and numberless other things might be

mentioned, which you would say without hesitation are *sins*; but in order to see into the true nature of sin, we must have something more than mere examples of it; for there is a deadly character about sin, a something poisonous and venomous, which we shall not perceive by only looking at flagrant instances of it. We can easily see the horrible nature of such sins as I have mentioned; we see that *murder* is a thing against which our natural instinct revolts, every one shrinks at the thought of shedding his brother's blood; *drunkenness* again is a manifestly cursed thing, for it brings poverty, and sickness, and broken hearts, and early death; *lying* also cuts at the very roots of all society; and *slander* is lying of the worst kind, because it is done with the devilish purpose of injuring our neighbour: but these are great staring sins, and the fact of these being hateful to God does not help us much to understand why it is, that sin manifested, not in great heinous acts, but in small deeds, nay in no deeds at all but only in thoughts and intents and wishes, should be so hateful a thing, so poisonous, so sure to produce death. For this is the character always attributed to sin in the Bible; "fools," we read, "make a mock at sin," but it is only *fools* who do so, no wise man mocks at it, because he knows that it is a serious thing which will bear no

joke; no wise man plays with fire, or with poison, or with a loaded gun, and for the same reason no wise man plays with sin; no wise man jokes about sickness or about death, and so no wise man jokes about sin; fools make a mock at it, just as a mad man will mock at his fetters, because he does not know what it is he mocks at. But is sin described in the Bible in a way to make us mock? is it there represented as a light thing? what is the first thing we hear about sin? it is that threat to Adam, In the day thou eatest of the forbidden tree thou shalt *die*, that is, in the day thou *sinnest* thou shalt *die*; thus sin came into the world with death marked upon it; sin *as sin*, however trifling the particular instance may appear to us, was from the beginning marked as *Poison*; to commit sin was to die. What was there so fearful in Adam's sin? there was no murder in it, no theft, no hatred, none of the more ordinary features of sin, and yet it brought death into the world and all the long catalogue of human woes. And that Adam's sin was the same in essence as all other sins, appears at once from this, that the first sin which sprung up from it, the first-fruits, so to speak; of the enormous crop of sins of which Adam sowed the seed, was—what? the very rankest and most monstrous of all sins, the murder of a brother; who shall say that Adam's sin was

not deadly, when it begat such a fearful sin as this? and yet Adam little thought of what he was doing, he little deemed that his want of self-command, in the matter of the forbidden tree, was to re-appear in the form of the murder of his child. And so we sometimes judge of sin; we think that this or that sin is of no great moment, is small, hardly to be considered; but I say that Adam's sin, though it appeared small, has filled this world with wretchedness; for the misery of the world is the consequence of the sin of the world; if there were no sin, there would be no misery; for, even though it pleased God that man should eat bread in the sweat of his brow, and though it pleased Him to make many of His creatures poor in this world's goods, yet there would not on that account be of necessity any pain in the world: it is not poverty that has made this world wretched, I have often seen the poor happy and the rich miserable; nay it is not even physical pain, sickness, weakness, decrepitude, which has furrowed such deep scars on the face of the earth, I have often seen such perfect peace on the bed of one racked with pain, as does not belong to many in youth and health; it is something far different from these things, it is nothing else but sin, sin which shews itself sometimes in the form of strife and envying, sometimes as pride and want of charity, sometimes

as avarice, sometimes as lust, sometimes as irreligion and unbelief; it is sin, in one or another of the thousand forms in which it has spread over the world, that mars the peace of mankind.

And the mischief of sin is its universality, it is everywhere; different parts of the world have different products, one produces one thing and another another, and men have different characters in different quarters of the world, and different manners and customs and different colours, but in this one thing they all agree, that sin has tainted them all. I consider this to be proved by the fact of the universal prevalence of vice; where is the pure virtuous nation, the people which has no laws for criminals, because there are no criminals? where is the place, in which every man speaks truth to his neighbour, and there is no dishonesty and overreaching and fraud, and no backbiting and slander? It is impossible not to see that there is some dire disease upon the whole human race, and that disease is *sin*: it may shew itself in different ways, but these are only varied forms of that which is in essence the same; it will appear more palpable here than there, because here perhaps the ground is more favourable, or there are some circumstances more favourable than in the other place, but still shew itself it does and will everywhere. And it does not

confine itself to any particular age; as soon as a child can walk and speak, it is made quite clear that the root of sin is in the child, that it only requires favourable circumstances, and it will spring up and flourish.

But what is it, which makes all that we call sin so hateful to God? I reply by reminding you of what I said in another sermon, that God's will ought to be done here and everywhere, that all things were created in order that they might obey His will, and that nothing in God's universe can be pleasing to Him, which rebels and sets up another power and will not serve Him; but sin is rebellion against Him, it is just this, it is obedience to the wishes of another and not God; as for instance in the primal sin, that of Adam, it was not the mere eating of fruit that was displeasing to God, it was because that eating involved flat rebellion, it was because God had said, "Ye shall not eat," that to eat was death, for thereby it was made a question whether man would obey God or whether he would not; and this is the character of sin. Now it is true that in most cases sin produces evil consequences, but there is more in sin that is hateful than its mere results; it is not merely because *pride*, for example, may lead to evil consequences that it is hateful to God, it is hateful in itself, hateful

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because it is the worshipping of self instead of the worshipping of God: it is not merely because *love of money* leads to all evil, that the love of money is hateful to God; but because it is a deliberate choice of mammon for our god, and therefore a deliberate throwing off the yoke of the other master, who cannot be served if mammon is our god. In fact the question is this, whether we will serve God or whether we will not; some one we must serve, it is not in man to be free, and if he do not serve God he must serve Satan, or (which is only another form of Satan-worship) he must set up himself as his own god, and bow down to his own vain imaginations; and to commit sin is to disclaim the service of God, according to those words of our Lord, "he who commits sin is the servant of sin:" to commit sin is to desert from the army of God and join His enemy, and that is why it is hateful to Him, it is direct rebellion against His government, and an assertion like that of the men in the parable who said, "We will not have this man to reign over us."

And you will see this too in the nature of sin, that all sin is against God; men do not always recognize this, they see that certain crimes are sins against their neighbours, but they do not always see that they are offenses against God; and that is why men rate offenses, which concern

the good order of society, so much higher than those which are of a more spiritual kind; for instance, many a man will see the wickedness of theft, who does not tremble at blasphemy, and to live without prayer to God is a thing which numbers think nothing about, who nevertheless would shrink from bearing false witness against their neighbour. But this is a low imperfect view of sin, the view of a man who sees only a small part of the truth; the laws of the first table cannot be less important, nay I should think they would be more important, than those of the second, and it is only because men are carnally-minded and near-sighted, that the sins against men appear to them so much more flagrant than those against God. Yet even these, I mean sins against men, do not in fact assume their blackest character, except when looked upon as being also sins against God; and so it was when David repented heartily of his grievous sins, adultery and murder, that he confessed to God, "Against *Thee* only have I sinned;" for when his guilt came home to him in its proper colours, the enormity of his crime against God overwhelmed all other thoughts; he saw the monstrous gap which lay between him and God, he saw that his sin had separated him from God, estranged him, that the sin against God was so much greater than the sin against man, by

how much God is greater than man, and by how much it is a more fearful thing to offend the ever-living God, than to offend one of the same frail nature as ourselves. And thus, if we wish to put a proper stamp upon any sin we must look upon it with reference to God; we must tear away that colouring, which men have agreed to put upon sin when it does not particularly affect their own interests; we must regard sin, as it will be regarded when the judgment is set and the books opened; many a sin, which has passed here for slight and trifling, will then appear as a very monstrous sin indeed; idle words for instance, words by which God's Name has been taken in vain, how often do such drop from the lips of men and are thought of no more; but do they drop into the earth and die? As God liveth—*No*; they too will rise in the resurrection of the dead, and then it will be seen by the whole universe, whether it is a slight thing for a creature to wag his tongue in insulting his Creator, whether it is a trifling matter that a being like man, who has been gifted with a voice to praise his Maker withal, should use that voice in insulting Him who gave it. Again, men do not in general look with horror on a man who never comes to church to worship God; but consider this sin as a sin against God, and is it a trifling one?

surely a day will come when it will be seen by the fearful judgment of God on the ungodly, whether those were committing any trifling sin who allowed their own business or their own pleasure, or their own pride, or their own caprice, or any other cause, to hinder them from performing one of the greatest duties of their lives, namely that of praising God in the congregation, acknowledging Him publicly as God and Lord, professing faith in Him, offering up prayer to Him, entering into holy and deep communion with Him.

Christian Brethren, I implore you to look upon things now with the same eyes, with which you will see them when you open your eyes again after the sleep of death; we must not let the phantoms of this world play before our eyes, till we miss the real nature of things, and are unable to see things as they are; sin is a horrible thing, a monster in God's universe, which ought to be a universe of obedience, it is horrible in its nature because it *is* sin, because it is rebellion against the holy will of God, and we ought to see it to be so. Satan can disguise himself as an angel of light, and so sin which is his offspring may be dressed up, and painted, and veiled, until its horrible features are obscured and it has put on the semblance of beauty. You know what I mean

by this figure; the world for its own purposes keeps the standard of sin low, and passes over this and that, which God will not pass over, as being human infirmity or a pardonable indiscretion, or sometimes it puts a bold face on the matter, and consecrates as honourable that which is utterly shameful; but ye are not of the world, Christian Brethren, therefore let not your judgment be such as is given by the world. Learn to feel more and more that (as the Apostle says) "sin is exceeding sinful," raise your view of the nature of sin by meditating upon the holiness of God, let your eyes wander above the distorting fogs of the world to the pure ethereal heaven of God, and think what can enter there; think what purity must be His who counts the heavens impure, and who charges the angels with folly; and then consider, in what light things must appear to Him which to us perhaps appear of no great moment, but which yet are sin, and as sin abomination in His sight. Alas, Christian Brethren, if one looks upon the matter thus, the question would rather seem to be what is not sinful, than what is? the question would rather be, which of our actions is not tainted with sin, than which is? I do not mean that we may not bring forth fruit pleasing to God, I believe that by God's grace we may, but certainly I think that many of our seem-

ing fair deeds, if exposed to the pure light of heaven, would appear all marred and spotted with the spot of sin.

And here is the key to the fallen state of our nature; it is this sinfulness which runs through all our acts, except those which are done by the help of God's Holy Spirit, which renders our condition so deplorable: sin hath separated us from God; betwixt Him and us there is a great gulph; our wills are not the same, we do not naturally love what He loves and hate what He hates; quite otherwise is it, we too often desire those things which are an abomination in His sight. Yet not wholly so; we are not fallen to such a depth that we can gain no glimpse of the height from which we fell; we have lost paradise indeed, but still we know that it was a happy place, happy because man was then at one with God, and we sigh to regain it; were it not so, our condition would be indeed worse than death, it would be a state from which I think we may without presumption say, that redemption would have been impossible. You have lost, Brethren, by Adam's transgression your union with God, you have lost your life in Him; but you have not lost your wills, you have still free wills given you by Almighty God, and have still the heart aspiring to God, though a body of flesh inclining you to sin; you have still the

power of shaking the fetters which sin has riveted upon you, and wishing yourselves free, and exulting in the hope of liberty. Never believe any who would tell you that man's spiritual being is wholly gone, that he has no sense of his fetters, no aspiration after better things, that there is no spirit within yearning after good even while evil is present with him; it is that spark of life which makes you *men*; it is even this in which consists one distinctive attribute of a man above a brute, that he has this moral sense, this preference of good above evil, this willingness of the spirit, however much it may be checked and disguised by the weakness of the flesh.

But I must say no more on this subject; it is an infinite subject, that of the nature of sin and its relation to man and God, and time would fail before half had been said that might be said upon it; even now I have exhausted almost all the time which I have usually employed in addressing you, and yet I have as it were only brought you to the threshold of the text. I have been engaged only in sketching something, if I might, of the nature of sin itself, but I have said nothing about the forgiveness of sins, for which in the text we pray, and nothing about the peculiar argument used for obtaining our petition; hence I am aware that there must have been a certain amount of gloom



hanging over what I have said; the picture of sin is of necessity gloomy, it may not be cheerful, it must be stern and painful; but the clouds will break and the darkness flee away, when I come to speak of the forgiveness of sins, and of that Sun of Righteousness who will rise with healing in His wings. This part of the subject I must reserve until another time; at present I must speak of one more character of sin, which will tend to complete the view I have given.

It is this—that sin is a thing which *must be punished*; I say, sin is a thing which must be punished: it may seem a mysterious thing that God cannot forgive sins, but He cannot, that is, He cannot except through our Lord Jesus Christ; you may be sure He cannot, for if it were possible do you suppose that that holy blood would have been shed? do you think that anything short of actual impossibility would have required the sacrifice of Christ? and do you suppose that, after praying that if it were possible the cup might pass from Him, our Saviour would have been obliged to drink that cup, if the salvation of man could have been otherwise accomplished? I should judge not; and therefore, Christian Brethren, if you want anything to give the finishing stroke to the fearful character of sin, add this, that it cannot be forgiven! cannot be forgiven except through

the sacrifice of Christ! And I would have you consider what must consequently be the condition of those, who allow this blessed time of trial to pass away without obtaining pardon for their sins; I would have you reflect on the feelings which will gnaw the heart of a man, who, having here refused the gift of God, shall find in hell that there is no remission of sins, because sin cannot be forgiven and must be punished! God save us from coming to such a condition, Christian Brethren; for assuredly, if there be food for remorse and despair to feed upon anywhere, it will be in the hearts of those, who are able to remember, how that here they received the offer of pardon and renewal in the image of God, and that because they loved their sins, and did not like to banish them and follow Christ in quiet obedience, and because they trod under foot the mighty sacrifice once made, therefore there is now no place of repentance, no more sacrifice for sins! God save us from this, Brethren, and give us grace to pray for that great gift, which may now be had by earnest worshippers of God, even the forgiveness of sins!

## SERMON VIII.

### THE LORD'S PRAYER.

S. LUKE xi. 4.

Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.

LAST Sunday evening, Christian Brethren, I began to speak to you upon these words, and intended to have gone through the whole of the subject suggested by them; but we were fixed, as it were, by the sight of sin; we began by considering what sort of thing it was for which we asked forgiveness, and we found that it was such a mysterious and such a monstrous thing, so poisonous in its nature, so venomous in its bite, that our minds were fixed with wonder, and instead of passing on to the cure of sin, our time was all taken up in thinking of the nature of the disease. You will remember that I then called your attention to this fact, that sin is hateful in itself; that it is not only great flagrant crimes against

society which God hates, but sin itself, all disobedience to Him, all rebellious feelings and irreligiosity of heart, whether it issue or not in overt acts of wickedness. I spoke of sin as a disease which has been epidemic from the beginning, and which is as universal as it is deadly, and I shewed you how it separated us from God, and also how its deadly character was stamped by this above all, that it cannot be pardoned except through the sacrifice of Christ. All this you must bear in mind: I have tried to impress you with a sense of the importance of sin, of its extreme hatefulness to God, its deadliness, in order that you may feel at once the necessity and the difficulty of having your sins forgiven; for you cannot take your sins to heaven with you; unless they stay behind, you must; every one of your sins, slight as it may appear, must be wiped out by some means or other, for it is a blot and a scar upon a body which must be perfectly pure and spotless to enter heaven.

If then we are to get rid of our sins, let us examine how this may be done; and you are to notice that there are evidently two sides of the question to be considered, that is, we must examine what is to be done on God's part, and what on our own. On the first of these I shall say very little, but that little will be important. I

spoke of sin being in itself unpardonable, and so it is; though I cannot wholly tell you why, certainly it is so, and therefore there would be here, if nothing hindered, an obstacle to our salvation lying on the threshold; it would be to no purpose that we sought for pardon, if in the nature of things pardon could not be obtained. But whatever else may hinder our union with God, at least this first great obstacle has been removed; this was precisely the great thing which Christ our Lord did, this was the gift which He received for men, even for His enemies, when He ascended up on high; He obtained this by His incarnation and by His cross and passion, that it should be possible for God to forgive sins, and yet be a just and jealous God. How this gift was obtained it is not for you curiously to inquire; it is enough for you to know that, notwithstanding the dire character of sin, notwithstanding its extreme hatefulness to God, and its fearful effect in poisoning our spiritual life, yet there is such efficacy in that blood once shed for sinners, such virtue in that sacrifice which we commemorate on Good Friday, such omnipotence in the cross and passion of our Lord, that sin can be forgiven. You probably do not see why such a sacrifice should be necessary; you might have thought that God could easily pardon sin, that there needed but a cry for mercy, and

straightway God would grant it; but you do not judge aright, you do not know what sin is, and you do not know enough of the character and being of God to give an opinion. The right way for you to think is this; you should fix your minds on the life and death of your Lord, endeavour to raise your minds to some slight conception of what is meant by those sentences of the Creed, that Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, was born of a woman, and that He suffered, died, and was buried, and then try to measure sin by that; you should measure the value of forgiveness, by the price which has been paid for it; you should not form your own notions of sin first, and then make an estimate of the difficulty of pardon afterwards; but you should look at the price paid, and then calculate the nature of sin. But anyhow the price has been paid; assuredly we could not have been pardoned otherwise, but just as certainly we can be pardoned now; "we who were far off," as the Apostle says, "are brought nigh by the blood of Christ," we who are by nature at enmity with God, and who by our evil deeds have sorely offended Him, are reconciled and may have the pardon of our sins. I wish men in general felt more of the difficulty of being pardoned, and then perhaps they would value the atonement more; they look upon sin as a light thing, as a thing that

may easily be pardoned and which need not disturb their minds, and so they think lightly of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ; they do not value the message we have for them, they think they can do very well by themselves, and that all will be well in the end. But I cannot think that that is a small thing, which brought down Christ from heaven, and I cannot believe that God will look with favour upon men, who have been told of what Christ has done and have not been moved, who have seen nothing hateful in their sins when they know that they cost the Son of God His blood. Oh, Christian Brethren, surely sin must be repented of and pardoned here, or it will be the seed of eternal death hereafter; and that is what makes the heart sink and the spirit groan, when we look upon the way in which men for the most part live, when it is manifest that they are not loving God, but are filling their bellies with the swine-husks of sin; shall not God be avenged for this? shall not sin here be death hereafter? shall the Devil be worshipped in this world, and not be the companion in the next? There is enough I believe to make any one who looks upon the world to say, as Jeremiah did, "Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" for the *slain*,



those poisoned by Satan, "dead in trespasses and sins."

However, most of us must take our minds from such reflections, with the thought that "the dead must bury their dead," but that anyhow ourselves must seek to obtain pardon of our sins and life and liberty. Let us therefore think on our sins, and endeavour to determine whether we are doing our best to get them all blotted out of God's book, and washed out by the blood of Christ. I shall not speak of the washing which we all received when we were brought into Christ's church, but I wish to speak of what has happened since: all of us have sinned since then, none of us dare stand on the pardon received in his baptism, and say that on that ground he dare meet his Judge; and therefore I wish to consider what has become of all our sins since, whether they are lying upon our backs and ready to sink us down to hell, or whether they are removed. But here again I do not intend to consider any great monstrous sins; if I were to do so, any person here might probably go away and say, "what the minister said was very true, and would be very useful for many whom I could name, but thank God it did not apply to me;" if this were to be the result, my preaching would have been in vain, for I want to say something which shall

apply to *you*, to every one of you, and that you may receive assistance in trying yourselves before God, in "judging yourselves," as S. Paul calls it, "that you be not judged of God." When therefore I speak of sins and their forgiveness, let us bring to mind our own particular sins, those to which we are most liable, those which most frequently get the better of us; I do not know what they may be, but I am sure that every one must have some, some daily sins which require daily pardon: the Church supposes us all to be in this condition, because she bids us all join daily in that confession which we have used to-day, she bids us all confess that we have erred and strayed, that we have done those things which we ought not to have done, and left undone the things which we ought to have done; she believes that we require daily pardon as much as daily food. Our Lord also, you may observe, was speaking in the text to His disciples, to those who loved Him and wished to obey Him, and yet He bid them ask for forgiveness of sins; and therefore, doubtless, this is a prayer for all, not only for the very wicked, but for the very good, not only for those who live without God in the world, but for those who are most anxious to please Him. And I would hint to you by the way, that we are perhaps not fair judges of our

own actions; many a deed which we consider harmless may be very far from harmless, many a deed which seems to us good may be in reality very much mixed with evil; our spiritual sense is often dull and blunt, and we do not see things as they are; and that is why the lives of some men, which seem to us so saintly and heavenly, appear far otherwise to the men themselves, for their spiritual sight is clearer, and they can see more of the real nature of their own actions, and how far they are from being pure in the sight of God.

Supposing then that we all feel our need of forgiveness, what are we to do? In the first place, we must repent of our sins; repentance must go before forgiveness; John the Baptist must come first with his doctrine of repentance and his austere life, before Christ can approach with pardon and forgiveness. But what does repentance mean? surely this—unfeigned sorrow for what we have done amiss, and a steady desire and purpose never to do the like again; this at least it involves; no one can repent without that godly sorrow which the Apostle speaks of, and which works repentance not to be repented of. It is vain for a man to think he repents, because he says with his mouth that he has done wrong, because he says with his mouth that he is sorry:

why is he sorry? is it because he has offended God, or because he has already tasted the pleasure of sin, and now has only to look forward to the judgment? alas, such sorrow is of the wrong kind; he only is truly sorry for his sins, who sees that they have made him loathsome, who can regard every sin as a thing grievous in itself, a thing to be mourned and wept over because it *is sin*. A man who repents must learn to hate sin for itself, and to desire with all his heart never to sin again; a man will never be in any degree safe from sin till he regards it thus; the fear of hell may weigh with him for a time, but somehow its terrors wear off, they are distant, not distinctly seen, and notwithstanding that they seem so calculated to appal, they do not practically affect men much; but if a man gets to see that sin is hateful in itself, then indeed he will repent of having committed it, and will strive to do so no more.

And in order to repent of all we have done amiss, it is necessary for us to call all our actions to account, to examine what we have done, to try this deed and that by the standard of God's word and our own conscience; we ought not to be contented with mere general repentance, but should go deeper and sift out all the evil that we have done, and repent of it all. It is a good thing each

evening to look back on the day past, and examine what has been amiss: has there been any pride, or conceit, or anger, or malice, or unkindness, or disobedience to them to whom obedience is due? or any unguarded words, or any tampering with truth, or any want of openness and honesty in our dealings, or any approach to extravagance or intemperance, or any idleness or wantonness, or any covetousness or envy? In these and a thousand other respects it would be well for us to consider the work of the day past, and how far it has been such as God would approve. I know it is unpleasant and difficult thus to judge ourselves, but indeed we ought to do it, and I think it is because we do not sufficiently do so that God often sends us affliction, to give us time to do on a sick-bed what we ought to have been doing before: but anyhow, whether a hard task or no, we ought thus to try ourselves, and make ourselves acquainted with what we have done amiss; and when we have done that, we should go with true sorrow of heart to ask forgiveness for all.

Moreover there must be determination to forsake sin and to amend; it will not do for us to repent of our sins, and then go and do the like again: I do not mean that in matter of fact we never shall commit the same sin twice, but I mean

that we are not to rest satisfied with mere sorrow and repentance, if we find ourselves not really growing better. We may grow better if we try; for here I will remind you, that Jesus Christ our Lord has gained for us something more than mere forgiveness, He has given us power to resist sin; Christ was tempted by the Devil, and Christ conquered him; in order to shew us that although we may be tempted, yet we may gain a victory over the tempter; and therefore He has sent into the world the Holy Spirit to be a purifying, sanctifying power, to enable us to leave off from sin and serve God. And if we ask for forgiveness aright, God will give us that and something more, He will give us holiness, He will enable us to walk in those ways in which we desire to walk, and to avoid those things which we hate. But it is clear that we shall not obtain this answer to our prayers unless they are very real prayers, and proceed from a very real sense of sin; for if we are only sorry that we have done wrong because we think we shall be punished for it, and yet love the sin and believe that it has been forgiven, what reason is there why we should not commit it again and have it forgiven again? I think that as we read in S. James of the devils having faith, so in this sense we might speak of their having repentance and sorrow for sin; for

they too know that rebellion against God, that is, *sin*, has made them wretched, and as having made them wretched they may be sorry for having done it; but this is no godly sorrow, it is only selfishness, and therefore it bears no fruit, it obtains no forgiveness because it desires no holiness. Forgiveness cannot come without some degree of holiness, because, if a man does not desire to be free from his sins in order that he may be holy, he desires only to be free from the punishment of them, and that is not a holy wish, not a wish pleasing to God, such a wish as devils may feel, but not such as any one ought to feel who ventures to use the Lord's Prayer.

Observe therefore, that in the prayer of the text you pray *against* sin; you *do* not, indeed I think deliberately you *dare* not, pray for mere pardon in order that you may sin again; therefore you pray that you may be delivered from both the consequences and the power of sin. And hence I would say, do not think you have obtained an answer to your prayer, unless you find that sin is really losing its hold upon you, unless you really find that you are beginning to love sin less and God more, unless you find that in some degree at least you are growing more like Christ. If you imagine that Christ came merely to give you forgiveness you mistake His mission, this was only



part of the gift He bought for us, and you must not separate what God has joined together, namely pardon and sanctification; the gift of the Holy Ghost to transform, renew, purify, this is quite as great a gift as the forgiveness of sins; to forgive sins does not of itself fit for heaven, it is only forgiveness coupled with sanctification, which will enable us to stand uncondemned in the presence of God.

For indeed Christ did not come to put away the law, but to confirm it; you ask for forgiveness because you have not kept the law, and Christ has purchased for you the forgiveness you need; but is this to be a substitute for keeping the law? nay, rather it is to be the very thing which shall bind you most strictly to keep it. It is because God has received you freely, and allowed you to call Him Father, and promised you pardon and sanctification, that you are bound to keep His law with all your heart; it is because God has put away your sins at the price of the priceless blood of Christ, and because He has sent His Spirit into the world to purify you and enable you to do things which you could not do before, that you are bound no longer to live to yourselves, but to God who has done so much for you. You are, or ought to be, as S. Paul says "*dead to sin,*" and therefore you are to live to

God as men alive from the dead, and your members are no longer to be the instruments of uncleanness or unholiness, but to be servants of God; your tongue is no longer to be your own, or to be used for evil, but it is to be employed in speaking His praise; yea, all that you have and are are His, and are to be used for Him and His glory; God has touched you and made you His own, therefore are you to glorify Him with your body and your spirit which are God's.

I must now say a few words upon the latter portion of the text, "For we also forgive every one that is indebted to us." These are very remarkable words: you see our Lord will not allow us to pray for pardon except under a certain condition, namely that we give pardon ourselves. A man who does not forgive others cannot be forgiven himself, and therefore is not permitted to pray for forgiveness. This seems only just, though we might perhaps have disregarded it; the teaching of the Gospel always brings our conduct towards God into connexion with our conduct towards men; thus we read, that "he who loves God must love his brother also," and that it is impossible for a man "to love God and hate his brother:" and so in the text, pardon from God is represented as being alone possible through our forgiving temper: God will not forgive those

who do not themselves begin; standing as long as we delay beginning our neighbour, as long as that letter and the Lord's Prayer. For you will observe that beginning is only what we first choose, and not to pay the beginning is a fearful thing; yet indeed we do more than we pay the beginning, we will have vengeance on our own heads, we pay that not to begin as to pay that we must do as we think others that is not begin to them at all, but doing it is usually with them. It is as well doing to receive God's things with us by our feelings with others, but Christ has commanded us to do, and we may not add the beginning otherwise. Is there any one here who does his neighbour any good? If so, do not you see the Lord's Prayer; is there any one who has received no injury from his neighbour and has not forgiven that? If so, do not you see the Lord's Prayer; is there any one who has been injured by his neighbour and has not asked for pardon? If so, do not you see the Lord's Prayer. Indeed this clause of the Lord's Prayer which I have often as a text this morning is as I have seen an edged tool which may not be played with; it appears to give us a blessing, but it may pay for a curse; it appears to ask the pardon, but it may cost the vengeance; for it leaves that to deal with you as you deal with others.

and how would you like such treatment? are you really feeling as you wish to be dealt with? I trust, you do so in many words towards God's name upon you.

I pray you think of these things. Christian Brothers, and remember what manner of love your light is to be, what they are that make the manner of God's dealings with you. We cannot know these that they may live as they please, and that God will have mercy upon them; but you are the master of this, God will deal with us as we deal with others; you remember the promise of the reward who hath been longed for thousands of years, and who put the future reward in power for a hundred years; that promise I have promised the children of men of us, but God will not be so marked, and with what manner we meet, with the grace to deal be measured to us. Therefore to me there is promise by saying you are these people of that, as long as there remains any injury whatever, by you or any injury that you have done and have not made amends for you will only receive the portion of the hypocrite. If you approach despising God with a prayer for pardon on your lips, and have no forgiveness towards any in your heart.

Lastly, Christian Brothers, I will say that although I have asked pardon for you at the

same text which brings before us the forgiveness of sins, I have as it were only entered on the subject, and have left unsaid an infinite number of things which might well have been said. And no wonder, for the subject of forgiveness of sins is emphatically *the* subject of the Gospel of Christ: that which differences the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ from all other revelations is, that it contains the means of pardon and renewal for those who have gone astray through sin, and therefore to preach on the forgiveness of sins is to preach on the whole matter of the Gospel; our Lord Himself spoke of this as His mission, that He was anointed to preach deliverance to the captives; and the Apostles had this ever in their mouths, that through Christ was preached deliverance from all things from which the law of Moses could not set free. And indeed, Christian Brethren, it may be spoken of as the work which you have to do, to obtain forgiveness of sins; one great remission you obtained in baptism, but since then it has been your daily work to obtain freedom both from the pollution and the power of sin; hereto are many aids provided, you may confess your sins to God, you may obtain absolution from His minister, you may, if your conscience is burdened, confess your sins to the same minister and obtain advice and absolution, you may receive

the great benefit of Christ's passion by eating and drinking His Body and Blood. All these aids have you, and if you make use of them, and having forgiven others seek through them forgiveness yourselves, I assure you in the name of my Master that you shall certainly obtain it. I would only say, be diligent in this work while you have health and strength, remembering that repentance and amendment and forgiveness are comparatively speaking easy during life, difficult, most difficult on a deathbed, if indeed they be not something worse, impossible after death. Oh, Almighty God, even now do Thou give us grace to forgive others, and so do Thou forgive us our sins!

SERMON IX.<sup>1</sup>

## THE LORD'S PRAYER.

S. LUKE xi. 4.

Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

ON this Sunday, Christian Brethren, which brings before us and presses upon our notice so much in the life of our blessed Saviour that is worthy of our deepest and most affectionate thought, I might well have deviated from the regular course of sermons which I have been preaching to you for some Sundays past, and have spoken to you on some point connected with the events of the day: and I should have done so, had it not been for several reasons. In the first place I remember, that if the prayer, "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil," belonged to one season more than another, it would belong to this holy season of Lent, which may be considered as out of the whole year particularly the

<sup>1</sup> Preached on the evening of the Sunday next before Easter.



time of conflict with evil. And again, these forty days of Lent, what are they but a record of those forty days during which our blessed Saviour was tempted by the Devil, and at the termination of which He obtained a glorious victory, which was as it were the commencement of the deliverance from evil which He came to effect for us? And further, the near approach of our blessed Saviour's agony brings most forcibly to our minds that reign of evil in the world which caused His death: if there had been no need of the prayer "Deliver us from evil," there would have been no need that Christ should have died; and it was only through those sufferings, through that marvellous humiliation and stooping of God to man, of which we are this week to witness the closing and crowning scene, that God was able to answer our prayers. And that is why in the litany we call to mind all the events of our Saviour's life, and ask deliverance by them each and all, saying, "By the mystery of Thy holy incarnation; by Thy holy nativity and circumcision; by Thy baptism, fasting, and temptation, Good Lord, deliver us. By Thine agony and bloody sweat; by Thy cross and passion; by Thy precious death and burial; by Thy glorious resurrection and ascension, Good Lord, deliver us." And lastly, by pursuing the course of texts which I have lately followed, we

shall have remaining for next Sunday a most appropriate text, "Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, for ever and ever!" appropriate, I say, for that day on which Christ led captivity captive, and entered into His kingdom, His power, and His glory.

I will therefore endeavour, by God's help, to say something for your profit on the words of the text, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil!" and in doing so I will first call your attention to that very mysterious temptation of our Lord, when He fasted forty days and nights in the wilderness, to which I have already referred. And the reason why I wish to call your attention to that is, because you may look upon it as a kind of type of all human temptations; as our Lord's life was a pattern of human life, His way of acting an example in all things of the way in which we should act, so His temptation was an example, a specimen, a type of human temptation, and the way in which men ought to bear it. The temptation of Adam and Eve is in one sense a type of all human temptation; that is to say, it exhibits to us the way in which Satan attacks us all by means of "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life;" it shews us the way in which he leads us astray by shaking our belief of God's words, telling us we shall *not* surely die,

when God has said "you *shall* surely die;" but inasmuch as Adam and Eve fell under the temptation, it only shews us our own weakness, it is but too like the specimens of temptation which we see all around us, in which Satan has only to entice and men at once give way: it would be a gloomy picture of temptation, if we had only the temptation of the first Adam to read in the Bible, and our hearts would sink within us, and though we might pray in a sort of despair, "Lead us not into temptation!" we should scarcely have any heart to add, "deliver us from evil;" we should be like the poor animal which has seen a serpent preparing to seize it for its prey, and it is fascinated, and moves not for very terror, and falls into the jaws of its enemy. Thus would it have been, had we no other temptation recorded in the Bible to fix our attention but that of the first Adam; but, thanks to God, we have that of the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, which ended not in defeat but in complete victory. If we look then on this brighter specimen of human temptation, this temptation of our Lord Jesus Christ, what does it teach us? this at least—and though other things beside, yet this it is which I wish you to mark now—that temptation is the natural lot of man, that it is what we must all expect, that what was wrong in Adam was not the being tempted,

but the yielding to temptation. Why Almighty God should have placed us in a world where we could be tempted, and where Satan ever goes about to tempt us and draw us into evil and work our ruin, this as it is not pious so it is not useful for us to inquire; it is sufficient that our Lord has shewn us that to be tempted belongs to our present condition, and that we are not to expect exemption from that to which the Prince of our race, the eldest brother of the human family, was so severely exposed.

But you may say that if temptation is thus the lot of all men, we ought not to pray as in the text, "Lead us not into temptation." This does not follow: sickness is the lot of our race, and yet we may pray to God for health, and God will send it to us so far as He sees it to be good for us; indeed we may pray for all things, if only we use the proviso which our Saviour added to His prayer, "Nevertheless, not My will but Thine be done!" and thus we may pray against temptation, because it is a dangerous thing and a thing painful to endure, even though we should come off victorious in the end. But after all, I conceive the spirit of the prayer against temptation is to pray quite as much for grace to withstand temptation as for freedom from it, quite as much for strength when temptation comes as for the happiness of its not

coming at all: the man who prays against temptation, who fears to encounter Satan, who is always alarmed lest he should find his enemy at his elbow enticing him to sin, this man will in his prayer most certainly include another for grace and strength; he prays against temptation, at the same time he knows that it is not likely that he will be exempted from that which falls to the lot of all, and therefore he trusts that he may by God's grace be found ever ready for the conflict, armed with the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit; he prays that no temptation may come upon him greater than he has strength to bear, but that God will make a way for him to escape that he may be able to bear it, and that however strong that enemy of his soul may be, there may be ever with him one stronger than the strong, even the Holy Spirit of God.

Observe however particularly, Christian Brethren, that there is no opposition between the words of the text, "Lead us not into temptation," and those of S. James, in which he tells us that God tempts no man. These are his words, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed."\* I

\* S. James i. 13, 14.

say there is no opposition between these words and those of the text, for though God does not tempt, He may suffer us to be tempted, nay, He may even put us in a certain position in order that we may be tempted, even as we read of our blessed Lord, that He was "led up by the Spirit to be tempted of the devil;" the temptation you see, was by the devil, but the leading up into the wilderness was by God. And I think there may perhaps be much meaning in the correspondence between the expression "*Lead* us not into temptation," and the words "*Jesus was led* up of the Spirit to be tempted;" it is as though our Lord, bearing in mind His own late severe conflict with Satan, and how He had been obliged three times to subdue him before he would depart for a season, and knowing how difficult such battles would be to all His disciples, had bid them pray to be saved from such a trial as His, had bid them pray that they might not be led into a conflict which peradventure might end in their fall.

There is one practical piece of advice which belongs to this subject, and which I may give you here. When you use the Lord's Prayer, you pray that you may not be led into temptation, and inasmuch as the flesh is weak, however willing the spirit may be, you do rightly so to pray; but you must remember that you must act consistently

with this prayer, that is, if you pray that you may not be led into temptation, you must take care that you do not go into it of your own accord; it is impossible that your prayers can be answered if you do not do what you can towards obtaining an answer to them. There must ever be this consistency between our practice and our lives; for instance, if we pray for daily bread we must work for daily bread, otherwise we cannot expect to receive it, and so if we pray to be kept from temptation we must strive to keep ourselves from it: it is worse than useless, because it is hypocrisy, to pray to be kept from temptation and then to run into it of our own accord; it is mocking God in a very awful way to ask for that, which we ourselves render it impossible for Him to bestow. Let me explain what I mean by an example. Suppose a man prays not to be led into temptation, and then goes and joins bad company, and so throws himself into temptation, how can that man's prayers have been sincere? he may say that there is no harm in joining with his friends in this or that occupation, provided he keeps himself free from their sins; well, be it so, but anyhow, my good friend, do not pray not to be led into temptation, for you yourself seek it: if there be any meaning in words, then he who "stands in the way of sinners, and sits in the seat of the scorn-



ful," goes into temptation; there never was any truer maxim than that of S. Paul, "evil communications corrupt good manners;" and there is a more homely maxim which means the same thing, and which tells us that "those who touch pitch must be defiled." And I do not think that any one is likely to retain his spirit undefiled, who allows himself to mix freely with those who do not honour God and who blaspheme His name and break His laws. If a person be compelled to mix in dangerous society and go into dangerous places, then I doubt not that though it pleases God to allow him to be led into temptation He will keep him from the evil, according to that prayer of our blessed Saviour shortly before He was crucified, in which He said, "I pray not that Thou wouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou wouldest keep them from the evil;" and I have often seen that those who have by God's providence been placed in the most apparently disadvantageous circumstances have, so far from being injured by their position, been tried and purified thereby, because they did not go into temptation themselves, and so God gave them grace to bear it; even as in the case of our Lord Jesus Christ, He did not go into temptation, He was, as we are expressly told, *led* into it by the Spirit; it was God's will, that in bearing all the pains of

humanity He should bear this also of being tempted, yet without sin, and so He came off victorious after a threefold conflict, and angels came and ministered to Him. This is an example for us; only let us be sure that we are led by the Spirit, and then we shall find that same Spirit ready to help our infirmities and angels ready to minister to us; but if we go into temptation ourselves, then we are not walking in the steps of Christ, and we must take the consequences of our folly. For instance, a man cannot expect to have God's Spirit with him who mixes with idle companions, as I have said before, and now repeat; he who of his own accord mixes with idle companions, will become almost to a certainty idle and unprincipled himself; he who accustoms himself to hear God's Name profaned will soon lose his reverence for it himself; he who mixes with those who profane the Lord's day will very soon profane it himself; this is the natural course of things, and there are abundant examples to shew that what I say is true. Or again, persons who give way to idleness, to loitering about, and busyboding, and gossiping, instead of attending to their own business, the care of their families, or whatever other duty comes upon them, persons of this kind are, I say, wilfully running into temptation, they are giving Satan an advantage over them, be-

cause an idle moment is always his opportunity; and they cannot say with earnestness of heart, "Lead us not into temptation," because they themselves go into it without any leading. And indeed I may say here, that we shall in general do much towards avoiding temptation by attending diligently to our appointed work; it was while the shepherds were engaged in watching their flocks (as you will remember), that is in their appointed work, that they received that happy message from heaven of the birth of Christ the Lord; and so doubtless it will always be found, that those who walk diligently in the path which God has marked out for them, and labour until the evening, when their Lord will call them in one by one and give them their wages, will find a safeguard against many a temptation, and feel the presence of God in their daily task and quiet walk of duty.

I might give you other examples; but you can perhaps supply them for yourselves, and each one for him or her self better than I can; you will understand me to mean in general this, that any one who prays against temptation must take good care not to allow himself to go willingly into any place or any company, nor to allow himself in any habit or way of life, which necessarily brings him into temptation; he may think he is strong

enough to stand firm against temptation, but he had better remember S. Peter, how sure he felt that nothing could induce him to deny His Master, and yet he *did* deny Him; indeed "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak," and he alone is safe, who is always in fear; no one knows the strength of Satan, and no one knows the weakness of himself, who has not tried them; Satan is strong because he has a treacherous friend in the opposite camp, I mean he has within us carnal appetites and low passions and unruly tempers, which are so many enemies to us and friends to him. Herein is the difference between ourselves and our Lord; when Satan attacked Him there was, so to speak, no handle for him, nothing to hang his temptations upon, and so he was vanquished at once by a few words of Scripture. But with us it is otherwise; alas, alas! we have that within us, which is ever but too ready to listen to Satan's fair words and enticing speeches and to give way to his suggestions, and therefore it is not safe for us to venture a battle with him unless he meets us in the path of our duty, and we can feel sure that we have not invited him; then indeed we need fear no evil, but may go forth like David against the giant in the strength of the Lord our God.

But I must go on to say something upon those

words of the text which we have not yet considered, "deliver us from evil," or as perhaps the words ought to be, "deliver us from the *Evil One*," that is, from the Devil. It does not make any great difference which way we take the words, because evil is the work of the Devil, and the Devil is the father of evil, so that it comes nearly to the same thing whether we pray to be kept from evil or from the power of him who produces evil. Nevertheless as we pray against temptation by the Devil, so it seems right to pray for deliverance from him; as we pray against the seductions of an evil spirit, so it seems right to pray for strength against him; and therefore I shall suppose the words, "deliver us from evil," to mean "deliver us from the *Evil One*," that is, from the Devil; and indeed we do well thus to pray, for certainly if there be a spirit who has power to influence our spirits and to influence them for evil, to suggest wicked thoughts, to lead us into sin, to undermine our fear of God, and so destroy our love of Him, that spirit and no other is the great enemy of our race. And there has been such a spirit at work from the beginning; from the time of Eden downwards, he has been at work in the world, and so fearfully has he carried things his own way, and led men as he wished to lead them, that he is called in Scripture the "prince of this

world;" he laid the first foundation-stone of his kingdom in the sin of Eve, and ever since he has been adding to his kingdom: who has not bowed down to him? what nation has there been, however polite and learned, that has not more or less done homage to the Devil and owned his power? Nay, even now, since the stronger than the strong has come into the world and taken away from the strong man his armour wherein he trusted and divided the spoil, since Christ came into the world to destroy the works of the Devil and set up His own kingdom instead of the Devil's kingdom, and give men deliverance from Satan's yoke, how lamentably do men still lie in bondage! how do men honour Satan and dishonour God! what impression can be produced upon any one who sees how the majority of the world live, but this, that Satan is their master and not God? In the form of intemperance he holds some in slavery, in the form of lust and vicious indulgence he holds others, in the form of love of money he governs numbers, in the form of carelessness and self-love he leads thousands blindfold: but I need not particularize the devices of Satan; yet I may say in general, that it is impossible not to allow the enormous power which he has in the world even now, now that Christ has died to set us free and to crush the serpent's head.

Yes, Christian Brethren, Christ our Lord died to set us free from Satan; He entered into combat with him in the wilderness and put him to flight, and thereby He shewed us that we may resist him with success; and He lived and died that we might have the power of conquering sin and living free from it. All those events, which we are about to commemorate this week, are part of the great work which our Lord wrought for us, the great work of setting us free from the Devil, and enabling us to live to God as those alive from the dead. Had it not been for this, we might indeed have yielded in despair to the power of evil; we might have said, "I find a law that when I would do good evil is present with me; oh, wretched man! who will deliver me from this body of death?" we might have felt that we were engaged in an unequal conflict of which the result was too sure from the first; but now we may say, "I thank God who hath given me deliverance through our Lord Jesus Christ;" and therefore it is that we may pray with hopeful hearts, "deliver us from evil." In one great sense Christ has delivered us from evil, He has so far chained Satan for us that he may be resisted; we need not clank our chains in hopeless bondage, and sigh for light but sit in darkness, and long for peace but remain in sorrow; for the Son hath



made us free, and doubtless if He makes us free we are free indeed. What remains therefore but this, that as we pray to be delivered from the Evil One, so we daily fight against him with all our hearts and with minds strengthened by our prayers. You will remember how the boy David slew the giant Goliath, he had but a sling and stone, but he slew him even with them, because he had God on his side: in like manner let us go out to the fight with that mighty enemy of Israel, even Satan, with the prayer "deliver us from the Evil One" ever on our hearts, and let us act in the spirit of that prayer: shall not all Goliath sins fall before us, when we have on our side the might of the mighty God whom they have defied?

For indeed, Christian Brethren, this life of ours is a warfare and not a time of rest; rest belongs to the next world where the Evil One may not enter, but to this belongs continual battle and alarm, and it behoves us to be clad in the whole armour of God. God in His word has never represented our lives as anything else but lives of strife; and when we began our Christian lives in baptism, what was it that we were called to but a life of war? were we not dubbed as champions of the cross, and pledged to fight the battle of God against sin, the world, and the devil? What right then have we to sit still and wear the soft

garments of peace, while Satan is taking possession of us body and soul, while he is twisting one string about us and then another, till at last we wake up and find ourselves bound hand and foot in the power of sin? Rest is for the next world, this is the time of labour and struggle and battle; and assuredly he is a Christian of the true stamp, who not only prays "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil!" but who bears this prayer about with him as the motto of his life, and who feels that as it has pleased God to place him in a world where he is liable to temptation, so it is his duty to be continually upon his guard to resist temptation; and that as there is in the world an Evil One, whose constant aim it is to become his master and usurp that place which of right belongs to Christ, so it is to be the business of his life ever to fight against this enemy of his soul, and to see that his heart is a pure and undefiled temple, worthy in some degree at least of the presence of Christ's Holy Spirit. And he who judges thus will be ever busy in resisting sin, in subduing pride, and selfishness, and envy, and covetousness, in rooting out unholy tempers and evil passions, in breaking all habits which are contrary to the will of God; for he will know that these things *may* be conquered, that there is a spirit in the world mightier than the spirit of evil, that Christ has

Himself been tempted and has resisted and conquered sin; and he will feel sure that, if we in like manner resist, Satan will flee from us, because he will find us strong in the armour of the Lord, who, having taught us to pray for deliverance from the Evil One, will give us strength for the fight and make us more than conquerors.

## SERMON X.<sup>1</sup>

### THE LORD'S PRAYER.

S. MATTHEW vi. 13.

For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory  
for ever and ever. Amen.

THESE concluding words of the Lord's Prayer are not found in the Gospel according to S. Luke, from which I have hitherto quoted. It would be unprofitable for us to consider why such an omission should have been made; but this may be said, that the Prayer is complete according to S. Luke. The words of the text are no prayer, but an ascription of praise; they do not ask for anything, all has been asked in the preceding part of the Prayer, but they finish up the prayer with an ascription of praise and power and glory to Him to whom they of right belong. And I said to you last Sunday, that the words which I have read seemed to me a fit Easter text: we have

<sup>1</sup> Preached on the evening of Easter Sunday.

had brought before us in the preceding portions of the Prayer our own deep needs, we have been led to contemplate ourselves as poor weak creatures dependent upon God for daily bread, for forgiveness of sins, for aid against temptation, for deliverance from evil; we have been led to meditate on our own poverty, our helpless infirmity, our bodily and spiritual wants; but now we have our eyes turned from ourselves to Him who is powerful and glorious, Him to whom belong of right "the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever," Him who is rich, yea infinitely rich, in all things, Him who is able to supply all those needs which we have brought before Him in our Prayer.

And if we ask in what way these things belong of right to God, it is obvious to answer that they are His because He is the one self-existent supreme God, the *I am that I am*, He who owns no origin, who has no cause of being beside Himself. I say that even thus all royalty and power and glory belong to God; He is our maker, our preserver, in Him we live and move and have our being; who can breathe when He has commanded the spirit to return to Him? who can retain his life one moment after God has ceased to give him leave? to whom do power and glory belong if not to Him by whom are all things? but I

apprehend that there is another way in which we may think of a kingdom and power and glory belonging to God, and which other way has a nearer connexion with us as Christians than that general way of looking upon them as belonging to God in right of His being the supreme God and Creator of all things; I mean that our Father who is in heaven has established a right to the title of the King of men, and has given men better cause to join in ascribing power and glory to Him, by what He has done for us in the person of Jesus Christ our Lord. The power which God has shewn in the world in other ways may indeed astonish us, and make us wonder at our insignificance: we may say as David did, "When I consider the heavens, the works of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast made, what is man that Thou art mindful of him?" we may look at our frame and say again with David, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made;" we may think on our own lives, the mystery of our being, we may meditate till each man seems to us a walking miracle, yea till every insect and plant and flower oppresses us with the sense of mystery of infinite depth; we may in this way raise our minds to an almost indefinitely high sense of the power of God, but still it is a power that does not particularly affect our hearts,

it is something without us, something that we contemplate as great and majestic and wonderful, rather than that which melts our hearts into the confidence of childlike love. But the power which God has manifested in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ is exactly that which other exhibitions of His power are not, it is such as at once addresses itself to our hearts, such as at once constrains us to confiding love, such as does not keep us at a distance wondering in blind astonishment, but bids us approach and receive life from Him who has power to make us live. And you will observe that all our Saviour's miracles have this as their moral, as that which is to be learnt from them; they are all acts of mercy, all evidences and instances of love, all such as to inspire us with hope and confidence of a more glorious and happy state than that in which we now are. For instance, has sin brought disease and sickness into the world? then Christ by His word healed sickness, and so shewed that He had not only the power but also the will to cure the ills of mankind: or has sin brought death into the world? then Christ raised Lazarus from the dead, and thereby shewed that He was, as He told Martha, "the resurrection and the life;" and moreover He did even a greater miracle than this, He rose from the dead Himself, thereby shewing that



those who are united by living bonds to Him shall not die eternally. And the specimens of power which were seen in Christ were such as to attach us by all bonds of affection to Him as a living personal friend; we see in Him a person of infinite power, whom nevertheless we can love; the power of God has been brought home to us, realized to us in a way in which it never was before; Christ is in fact to us at once the living sign of the power, the wisdom, and the love of God.

And indeed the works which have been done by our Lord Jesus Christ are of all God's works the most wonderful, and the greatest instances of power. For our Lord conquered Satan and redeemed us from the powers of darkness; and I reckon that to redeem a world from sin is even a greater work than to create a world: it is a great work, doubtless, to create a world and make it very good; but when the powers of evil have crept into the world and marred it and reduced it to a state of sin, and when Satan has become the prince of the world, then to root out evil and put the Devil in chains, and render holiness and happiness possible for men, is a greater work still; even as our Lord considered that to heal men's souls was a greater work than to heal their bodies,—“greater works,” He said to His disci-

ples, "shall ye do than these, that men may marvel,"—and it is a greater work, if we saw things aright, to deliver a man's soul from hell than his body from a fever. Wherefore, even comparing the new creation which is through Christ with the first creation of the world, we may say that the greatest specimens of power have been shown through Christ, that He hath done the most marvellous work of any which have yet been seen, and that when we ascribe power to God we may have in our minds our creation and preservation, but above all we ought to have in mind those more marvellous works of redemption and renewal, which have been the work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Or, in like manner, if we ascribe the kingdom to our Father who is in heaven, that is, if we recognize Him as the king of the world, it is true that we may see His right to be called king in the fact of His having boundless authority in the world; the sun, moon, and stars, all things in the earth, above the earth, under the earth, obey Him, and therefore He may be entitled king; but still He has, through Christ, a better right to the name still, for Christ has conquered the only enemy who questioned the right of God to govern the world, Christ has conquered Satan who had and indeed has a rival empire in the world, and who had at

one time all but universal dominion; even now his dominion is far spread, he has many subjects who will rather obey him than take God as their Lord, but still he has been defeated by our Lord Jesus Christ, the foundation of his kingdom is shaken, though not destroyed yet the destruction of his kingdom has been begun, and inroads are daily made into it. Every soul which is brought to serve Christ is one subject taken from Satan, every person baptized into Christ is one rescued from the Devil, if only he will keep himself free; so that what has been done gives us cheering hope concerning the end; we believe that a day will come when the Devil's power will have ceased, and when all nations will be brought to the obedience of Christ; and forasmuch as this blessed event, when it comes, will be but the consummation and perfecting of that of which Christ laid the foundation, we cannot but see that the kingdom is to be ascribed to God the Father very mainly in consequence of the work of God the Son; God has become the king of men through the work of Christ in a way in which He was not before; in a higher way too, for He has become king of their hearts and lives, or at least the beginning of the kingdom has been made, and we only wait the fulfilment. And so it was that the burden of the early preaching of our Saviour was,

“the kingdom of God is at hand,” “the kingdom of God is come nigh to you;” the kingdom of God came through Christ; God really became king of the world when Satan was overthrown; the usurper, who had held the throne almost without rival since the sin of Eve, was then for the first time shaken in his seat, and the sceptre was given back to God; not indeed fully, not without fearful remains of the Devil’s government, but still sufficiently to warrant us in the hope of the complete coming of the kingdom of God, and to make it right for us when we pray to say “Thine is the kingdom,” and to connect those words especially with the life and death of Christ.

And if glory also is to be ascribed to God, though doubtless He is glorified in the works of His hands, though the sun and moon speak His praise, and all nature seems to join in one hymn of adoration to Him the author of it, yet we may well say that God hath been glorified in Christ so as He hath been glorified in nothing else; because there is something so divinely glorious in the pardon of sin, given at such a price as that of the death of Christ, that it seems, when we once get firmly hold of it in our minds, to dwarf all other manifestations of God’s glory. The glory of God’s holy Name is, as I have said to you in another sermon, the end of all God’s works, and indeed

they all tend to His glory—but which most? which of all His works has led men most to praise Him, most to extol Him, most to glorify Him? surely the pardon of mankind through the life and death and resurrection of His Son our Lord. There is much that is magnificent and grand in the thought of the creation of a world, much that is wonderful in the preservation of a world in order and harmony; but there is in the condescension of the Son of God to our infirmities, in His suffering for our sakes, in His victory over the Devil and death for us, something so entirely beyond our power to have conceived, and yet something so divine and glorious when it is revealed to us, that we are constrained to confess that the glory of God has been advanced in the world most chiefly through the life and death of our Lord: of all God's glorious deeds these seem most to strike our minds and to sink deepest in our hearts, so much so that we may safely assert that he only can say with a due sense of the meaning of the words, "Thine, O Lord, is the glory," who steadily bears in mind the work of our Lord Jesus Christ; he only can duly ascribe glory to God the Father, who looks for the manifestation of that glory in the person and life of God the Son.

If I have succeeded in making my meaning clear to you, Christian Brethren, you will see

that I wish to give you this view, that the kingdom and the power and the glory which we ascribe to God are His especially through our Lord Jesus Christ, that it is He who has revealed the true sovereignty, the true power, the true glory of God to us, that it is He who has truly established the kingdom and the power and the glory of God in the world. And now let us turn for a moment to the event of this day, and see how that will come in particularly to illustrate the text. It does so because Christ, by His resurrection, first really entered into His kingdom. Christ is the true king of men; but in the days of His flesh He had not entered into His full rights, there were other powers which claimed rule over mankind, principally there were *sin* and *death*; the former was conquered by Christ when Satan met Him in the wilderness and was three times repulsed and subdued; but death still remained the confessed master of mankind; since Adam sinned death had reigned in the world, and all confessed that death must one day become their master, but Christ broke through this dominion of death, He proclaimed Himself the resurrection and the life, He promised life to those who should believe in Him, and He shewed that He was able to make His promise good by Himself conquering death and returning to life.

Here was the great significance of our Lord's resurrection; it proved Him Lord not only of the living but also of the dead, it shewed that nothing was too strong to resist His power, that He had in reality entered into His kingdom.

And as for the power and the glory, it seems to me that greater proof has been given both of the one and of the other by the resurrection of Christ, than by almost any other thing: for the rising of Christ is the type of our resurrection, and surely it is an exhibition of power and an accession of glory greater than almost every other, that God should raise us up again from the sleep of the grave, and put a new life within us, and cause us to live again. Indeed the whole life of Christ was a miracle, everything that He did and said was of surpassing wonder; but we may perhaps see more wonder and more glory in His resurrection than in anything else, because it is in a manner the seal and finish of all the rest. And therefore let us think of Him to-day as having entered into His kingdom, and manifested His power, and obtained possession of His glory; even as He said Himself, "Ought not Christ to have suffered and to enter into His *glory*?" this was His path to glory, a sad and bitter one through the gate of death, this was the entrance into His kingdom, an entrance of sorrow and



suffering and blood; but so it became Him to enter into His rest, so it pleased God to give Him the kingdom and the power and the glory, which of right belonged to Him. Wherefore let us join to-day with heart and soul in ascribing honour and glory, might, majesty, dominion, and power, to Him who has conquered death and opened the gates of life, and who is now crowned King of kings and Lord of lords.

And now, Christian Brethren, let me endeavour to give you a few practical thoughts respecting this kingdom and power and glory which belong to God. If indeed they do belong to Him, then doubtless it is our duty, yea our very highest duty, to recognise in our lives and practice that such is the case; as God said by the prophet Malachi, "If I be a master where is My fear?" so I would say, if God be your king, take care that you really fear and obey Him; if in your prayers you ascribe the kingdom to God, then do not in your lives ascribe the kingdom to any other person or any other thing. There are many competitors for the crown, there is Satan in all His manifold forms, there is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, there is that usurping king which governs so large a part of the world, that tyrant *Self*; take care that none of these become your masters, and usurp

that throne which belongs to God, which belongs to Him by every right which can give Him a title to you, which is His by creation because He made you and not yourselves, but which is His much more by redemption because He redeemed you and not you yourselves. Indeed, Christian Brethren, you have been bought with a price, even with the precious blood of Christ, and therefore you may not serve any other king than Him who redeemed you. And I am sure you must all see the reasonableness of this, and that when you say "Thine is the kingdom," you must mean, if you mean anything, "Thou art the king of my heart:" all I wish to urge you to bear in mind is, that you must wear the uniform of your Prince, that you must in very deed make it manifest to all men whom you serve. The kingdom of Satan is still deep rooted and far spread; when we say, "Thine is the kingdom," alas, we cannot mean that all serve God, for they do not, and therefore it is most needful that those who do desire to serve God should serve Him wholly and thoroughly, so that men may see their good lives and be led to serve the same king with them.

Moreover, Christian Brethren, let us illustrate by our lives those other words, "Thine is the *power*;" let us endeavour to live practically in

this faith that all power belongs to God; we are in a world of much confusion and difficulty, and we feel that we ourselves are weak and feeble, but surely our God is a God of power, powerful to preserve from evil, powerful to keep us from sin, powerful enough to give us peace in our death and a happy resurrection after it. It is a miserable thing to see no God in the world, to recognize no hand with us and no voice encouraging us more strong than those which are against us; and it is almost as wretched to know that God is a God of power, but not to feel assured that He cares for us; but if we be Christ's, we may feel assured of the strength of God being on our side, we can have no firmer proof of what God will do in our behalf, than that which He this day did when He raised Christ from the dead. There is a strong man armed in the world, who once kept his palace and had his goods in peace, but thanks to God One stronger than him has come and taken away the armour in which he trusted, and divided his spoils; and to-day was that victory completed, and we, who have celebrated it, may not doubt that the power which was then brought in for our help will ever be ours, and will be found sufficient for our needs.

And once more, if you ascribe in your prayer *glory* to God, saying "Thine is the glory," then

see to it well that you ascribe glory to God in your lives, glorifying God with your bodies and your spirits which are His. Indeed, Christian Brethren, you were made for the glory of God; you were made, as were all God's works, but you especially, to set forth the praise and honour of God, and it is in vain that you repeat the ascription of glory in the Lord's Prayer, unless you in fact lead such lives as in the minds of those who see you do glorify God. And you have, I think, in the events which we have of late been considering, the most striking appeal, the most affecting argument, to make you live to God's glory; for you have seen Jesus Christ crucified for you, you have seen His agony, His sacred hands and feet pierced, His brow torn, His body pierced, in order that you might be free from Satan and be able to live to God; and to-day you have seen Christ rise again from the dead, you have seen Him come home a conqueror of your enemy death; and what therefore shall hinder you from saying Amen to those words of S. Paul, in which he tells you that you are "buried with Him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead?" What hinders you from concluding, as S. Paul did, that you are not your own, but the servants of One whose glory

you are bound to set forth in all your actions and thoughts and words?

Lastly, I would call to mind that parable in which our Saviour tells us of a man who went to receive for himself a kingdom and to return, and of whom some said, "We will not have this man to reign over us;" but when he returned, having received the kingdom, he said, "As for those mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither and slay them before me." An awful exposition this of the wrath which will come upon those who refuse to acknowledge the kingdom and the power and the glory of God. Oh! my Christian friends, God save us from being among the number of His enemies when He returns to take possession of His kingdom! it may be a light crime for a poor Indian, who has been brought up in the worship of idol-gods, not to have acknowledged the kingdom of the true God, but assuredly it cannot be a light crime, nay it must be heavy beyond description, for any one of us who has been baptised into Christ, who has been brought up His servant, has been taught to celebrate the glories of His life and death and resurrection, to refuse after all to have this Man to rule over him. Alas, my brother, whom will you have to rule over you? if you do not yield yourself to God as one alive from the dead, to

whom can you yield yourself but to the Devil, to suffer the bitter pains of eternal death? Nay, my brother, yield not yourself to Satan, but rise with Him who rose this day; and when you repeat the Lord's Prayer before you sleep this night, think with yourself thus—I am not my own but bought with a price; Christ my Lord is risen, and am not I risen with Him? yea, other lords have had dominion over me, but henceforth will I own no lord but Him who created me and redeemed me, Him who though rich for my sake became poor, Him who passed through the grave and gate of death that I might live; therefore Thee, O Lord, will I honour and worship and obey, Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen!

## SERMON XI.

## THE STILL SMALL VOICE.

1 KINGS xix. 11, 12.

Behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and break in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.

THE character of the great prophet Elijah is a very striking one: he was in many respects the most remarkable of all the prophets of whom we read in the Old Testament; and it will be well to call to mind some of the principal circumstances of his life, before we consider that passage in it which is to be the subject of this discourse.

You must bear in mind in the first place, that about sixty or seventy years before the time of Elijah, ten of the tribes of Israel had revolted from king Rehoboam, and had made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king; and that he, in order to prevent



the people from going up to Jerusalem, had set up golden calves for the people to worship, and from his days to those of Elijah the ten tribes, or (as they are commonly called) the kingdom of Israel as distinguished from the kingdom of Judah, had been given to idolatry. Jeroboam's scheme succeeded perfectly, and so the people not only did not go up to Jerusalem as they were commanded, but worshipped all kinds of false gods, and became very abominable in the sight of God. The state of religion however became worse than before when Ahab came to the throne; for we read that "Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him; and it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal and worshipped him.....And Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger, than all the kings of Israel that were before him."\*

In such days as these the prophet Elijah began his work; and one may fancy the zeal and indignation with which he walked through the land, full of idol altars and priests of false gods and horrid sacrifices to devils; he felt that it was no time for ease and a merry heart when God was

\* 1 Kings xvi. 30, 31, 33.

being daily dishonoured, and so he wandered like a wild man, roughly clad with a girdle of leather about his loins, bearing witness throughout the land against the worship of idols, and endeavouring to establish the worship of God. He was very jealous for God's honour, and could he have had his will no doubt he would have destroyed all the idolaters in the land, and cut them up root and branch: the scene on Mount Carmel shews the way in which he thought the honour of God should be vindicated; he collected all the prophets and priests of Baal to the number of eight hundred and fifty, and there he stood alone for God, and dared the priests of Baal to a trial before the people as to which was really God, Baal or Jehovah. He addressed the crowd of people assembled, and told them that he wished them to be straightforward and honest, and if indeed Baal were God then by all means they should serve him; if Baal were God, let him send down fire from heaven to burn up the sacrifice. The people said this was a fair challenge, and the priests accepted it and failed; then, at the time of the evening sacrifice, when if they had not revolted from God the sacrifice would have been offered up for them in God's own house at Jerusalem, Elijah prayed and the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the sacrifice. This was a glorious moment for Elijah; the people

were convinced and shouted out that Jehovah was God, and Elijah, taking advantage of their zeal, persuaded them to take the whole of the prophets and priests of Baal and destroy them. And now, perhaps, the prophet thought that a great deed had been done, that the beginning of a reformation was made, that the people would not easily forget what they had seen, and king Ahab himself would no longer be the idolater he had been, but would turn and serve the Lord. But his expectation was soon destroyed; for the next thing we read of is that Jezebel sends a message to say that she has vowed he shall live no longer, and so he has to flee for his life to the desert. What a disappointment! what a blighting of all his hopes! he had had his darling wish fulfilled, God had permitted him to give a splendid demonstration of power, he had been able to give the most complete and terrific proof that Jehovah was God, and that Baal was no god at all; and this was the end of it, that he must flee for his life, and no real progress in the work made. So he sat down under a juniper-tree in the wilderness, and there he poured out his grief before God and begged that he might die.

And now it was that Almighty God taught the prophet a lesson, which it seems was quite new to him. Elijah went forty days and forty nights to

Horeb the Mount of God, and there he lodged in a cave, and "the word of the Lord came and said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? and he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I, only am left; and they seek my life to take it away. And He said, Go forth and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains and break in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice."

By this mysterious and awful scene was the lesson taught to which I have alluded, and which, as I said, the prophet Elijah seems not to have learnt before. He seems to have thought that the Lord *was* in the wind, *was* in the earthquake, *was* in the fire: he was a zealous, stormy, fiery person himself, and he thought that God's ways were as his ways, and God's thoughts as his thoughts: he would, if he could, have destroyed Jezebel and all idolaters at once, and God's forbearance was strange to him. In the one instance on Carmel

God had been pleased to let him try his own way of dealing with idolatry, and he had seen the effect; the people were astonished, convinced for the moment, and then went on as before: the strong wind came and dashed the rocks in pieces, but such blasts do not last long, and then all was as it had been. And you may remark that even Elijah himself, when he saw these wonders, when he witnessed the strong wind, and the earthquake, and the fire, was not much affected; he gazed in astonishment, he wondered at God's power, yet there was nothing to impress him permanently with a wholesome and religious fear: but when he heard the small voice, the voice of God speaking to him stillly and gently, then he covered his face and retired into his cave. And thus was Elijah taught, that if it were God's good pleasure to restore His worship amongst the apostate Israelites, it would not be by earthquake or fire, but by the gentle influence of His Spirit, and by that voice of His, which gently, but so as that all can hear who will, speaks to every man born into the world. At present it was God's will to punish that nation by leaving them to themselves, or by giving them at best only the irregular warnings of the prophets, but anyhow it would not be by earthquake and fire that they would be turned from their evil ways; these had been tried and

had failed ; the people had for the moment shouted Jehovah is God, but it had been only the bowing of their heads under a sudden blast ; the blast was gone, their terror had subsided, and they were no better than before.

It is perhaps hardly necessary for me to guard you against supposing that I mean to speak disrespectfully of the holy prophet Elijah. His burning zeal for God is made a proverb even in the New Testament ; and the very character of S. John Baptist, that greatest among those born of women before the time of our Lord, was that he should "go in the spirit and power of Elias." But I believe that it is almost necessarily incident to the human mind, to take views of things and to plan schemes different from those which God's wisdom approves, and the zeal and warmth of Elijah only made this difference between the human and divine mind more palpable and obvious. Let us look at God's dealings with mankind : Adam fell, men became corrupt, at the time of the flood God appeared in terror by wind and earthquake, and men were all swept away except eight ; but these replenished the earth, and their children became as bad as those before the flood. Soon the whole world became full of people who did not know God, and, except the glimmering light given to Abraham and his seed, "darkness covered

the earth and gross darkness the people." This is not, I think, what we should have expected; if we may make the supposition without irreverence of any *man* having been the governor of the world, things would perhaps have been otherwise arranged, idolaters and wicked persons would perhaps have been destroyed, and God's worship would have been established. I am not saying that with our increased light and knowledge we may not be able in a manner to justify God's dealings, and to perceive that, even seeing the little we do, we can see enough to shew us the wisdom and justice of God's ways; all I assert is, that at the first blush of the thing, the dealings of God with mankind, as we read them in the Old Testament, are very different from what we should have expected them to have been. But, however this may be, let us pass on to the great manifestation of God to the world, and see whether that be such as we should have desired, or have considered the wisest if left to ourselves. (Almighty God determines to make at length a general revelation of Himself, a revelation which should be for no country or people or time in particular, but for *all* countries, *all* people, and *all* times. This revelation is to have such powers of conviction, there is to be such life in it, that the Church founded upon it is to be universal and eternal; there is to be



in this revelation something which shall appeal equally to the king and the beggar, to rich and poor, to learned and ignorant; the afflicted is to find in it his comfort, the philosopher is to see here his deepest wisdom and that which harmonizes and renders intelligible to him everything else; if a man dares the majesty of God, and proudly leads a life of sin regardless of consequences, there is to be in this revelation that which shall render him speechless for very shame at the last day; if a man is heart-broken for sin and despairs of salvation, there is to be in this wonderful exhibition of God to man that which shall forbid him to despair and shall relieve him from all fear; in the sick-room this revelation is to be the light; in old age this is to be the staff and crutch; and in the hour of death and day of judgment, through this alone is there to be deliverance: before this revelation the evil spirits who have possessed the world are to flee as bats from the light of day, and the idols which for ages have claimed the stupid homage of mankind are to be utterly abolished. Now after having said thus much of the character of the revelation which God was to make of Himself to mankind, I will ask you what kind of revelation you think that a person who had been told beforehand that some event was to happen, which was to have the won-

derful results and the universal character I have spoken of, would be likely to expect? how would he imagine that all these things would be brought to pass? I think he would at all events have expected some magnificent exhibition of God's power, which all would have recognised at once as the great event they were looking for. But instead of this, what is the fact? A Jewish maiden conceives and bare a son, and this holy child is the revelation we have been expecting. This is the Saviour; this is Christ the Lord; this is He who is called "Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."\* How quiet and mysterious are the ways of God! there is nothing of the wind, or the earthquake, or the fire here, all is still and gentle. Neither is the manner in which the holy Son of God accomplished His work at all more like what we should probably have expected, than His advent itself: He taught men that the way to heaven was by self-sacrifice and suffering, and His own life was a practical comment on this; men did not flock to Him at once and hail Him as their deliverer, but He was despised and rejected; He condescended too to exhort and warn and teach without effect; and He consented to leave the world with pain and shame. Now I do not believe that any man

\* Isaiah ix. 6.

would for one moment have supposed, that this was the best way of healing the wounds which sin had made in the world, and of bringing men back to God: at the time of our Lord's life it formed a distinct objection to Him,—how could a poor man, the son of a carpenter, be the revelation of God to man? And yet this *was* the best way: I conclude of course that it was the best way, because in matter of fact it was God's way; but I think that even beyond this we may now see that it really was the best way. We can now see that the character which our Saviour recommended, and which He exhibited in Himself, is really the most noble character; Christians now do from their hearts admire what is humble and self-denying, far more than what is magnificent and splendid and showy; we can see in many a poor person, of whom the world knows nothing, qualities which strike us as really more admirable and traits of character which we love far better to look upon, than anything that we can find in the lives of the great kings and captains of the earth; if we did make idols now, I think we should find our gods rather in the gentle and unassuming, than in those great men who were worshipped as gods in olden time. And so likewise we are perhaps now able to see that the cross and passion of our Lord were, (apart from

their mysterious and atoning character,) the most glorious and divine spectacle that the world ever witnessed. Where else shall we find a perfect model of resignation and self-sacrifice? where else shall we learn such a lesson of the worthlessness of things temporal and the surpassing glory of things eternal?

This then is God's method of revealing Himself to mankind; God is not in the *wind*, nor in the *earthquake*, nor in the *fire*, but in the *still small voice*; and that voice, which spoke so gently in the time of our Saviour, has indeed been far more powerful than any wind or earthquake or fire could have been; the birth and life and death of our Saviour speak now as distinctly as ever, His Church which He founded has flourished, and now we thankfully acknowledge that God's ways are best, although His ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts.

I have thus been endeavouring to shew you, Christian Brethren, that the character which was attributed to the dealings of God in the vision of the prophet Elijah on Horeb, was remarkably visible in that most wonderful of the dealings of God, the incarnation of His blessed Son; and now I shall carry on the same train of thought, by pointing out to you, that in the lesser dealings of God with His Church and with ourselves, the same

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rule is found true. God is not in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but in the still small voice. Man's ways are noisy, blustering, rude, those of God are quiet, gentle, still: and indeed it is very important for us to observe this, for if the voice of God be so still and small, we are bound to be very attentive and to listen, lest perchance the buzz and rattle of the world should prevent us from hearing its words; and we must be on our guard against despising this thing and that, merely because it is unassuming and apparently small.

Let us examine a few instances. Think of the Sacraments, as God's ordinary means of grace: We believe that God is pleased to confer His grace and His Holy Spirit in baptism; but it is a still quiet invisible gift: many deny that any gift is given; this does not of course prove that there is no gift, but it does shew how still and quiet a gift it is, and how easily the voice of God's Spirit may be drowned. Many men live careless lives when young, and then turn and serve God; we believe that God has been speaking to them all the time, though they would not listen, for it was a still small voice, and it was easy during the noise of youth to pretend not to hear it. Again, in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper how undeniable is the gift, and how cer-

tain it is, from the confession of all pious men, that God then speaks to them such words as at no other time. But what a quiet mode of communication this is, how easy it is to deny the gift, as I suppose the careless and profane would! *they* cannot hear the voice and so they say it is only fancy, but it is a still small voice, and if men will not come out of the noise of the world into the quiet of the Church, they cannot expect to hear it. Men would probably expect that if God had really a church in the world, He would shew Himself in it in some very remarkable manner, that He would do something which all could see and must confess; but this is not God's manner of dealing, He speaks gently and quietly, and those that have ears hear, and those who do not wish to hear do not. ¶

Again, God often speaks by slight afflictions, which are easily disregarded. As when a man is laid for a time on a sick-bed, and so has time given him to think where he is, and what he is, and where he is going. A man who is careless may think nothing of it, but only wish himself well again, and then forget that he has been ill altogether; but perhaps this illness was the voice of God; we may wonder that God does not send more undoubted messengers, that He does not send His angel or strike a sinner to the earth in

the midst of his sins, and then reveal to him from heaven what he must do to be saved ; but again I say, this is not the way of God, He is not in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but in the still small voice. When a man is taken by sickness from the immediate temptations of the world, then the still voice speaks to him, and reasons with him on his sins ; and if a man resist this he must, for the sacrifice of God must be a willing one, and moreover he who resists the still small voice would be just as obdurate and deaf if God appeared to him in the fire.

Once more: I will allude to that voice of God which speaks within every man, and sits in judgment on his actions: I mean what is called *conscience*, and which is indeed the sacred voice of God, and is the guide of all men who come into the world. And I observe that the same character is still found; the voice of conscience is not a loud voice which is heard in revels and noise, but it speaks to each man by himself in the stillness of the night or in the quiet of solitude: then the voice must be heard, and that is why bad men cannot bear to be alone, because their conscience will speak, and they cannot help hearing it. The conscience may by many acts of sin be, as the Scripture says, *seared*, as with a hot iron, and so its voice may be destroyed ; but



to those who will listen it is a clear still voice, distinct in its articulation though gentle in its tone; and to those who will, it is a divine guide, as a lamp to the feet and a light to the path.

The conclusion which I would draw from what has been said is obvious, and has indeed been in a measure anticipated. If the voice of God be so still and small, whether He speaks by His ordinances, by His providence, by natural conscience, or by other ways to which I have not alluded, let us take good heed that we listen for its warnings, and be ready to obey it. Let us remember that the more carefully we walk in the ways of holiness, the more we mortify sin, and denying ourselves live soberly, righteously, and godly, the more diligent we are in prayer to God, in reading His word, in receiving His sacrament, the more clearly shall we hear His voice, saying "This is the way, walk ye in it." And if we will not follow the gentle guidance of His voice, assuredly the storm, the earthquake, and the fire, though they might frighten us, and might heighten our guilt, would never make us holy. Let us then admire the ways of God in humble thankfulness, and while we adore His mercy in condescending to call us, let us follow Him in holiness, in humility, and patience, until we hear the same voice calling us away home.

## SERMON XII.

## WILFULNESS OF SAUL.

## 1 SAMUEL xv. 22.

Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

I THINK we can scarcely read the history of Saul, as it is recorded in the book of Samuel, without some feeling of pity. He was no tyrant, who made himself king and ruled the people against their will; on the contrary, he was chosen by God Himself, was anointed by God's prophet and became king at the express desire of the people. He was a brave and noble man too, he led the Israelites against their enemies, and by God's help was victorious over them. Neither was he altogether an irreligious man, for we read, that when the people sinned against the Lord by falling on the prey and eating the flesh with the blood, (which was forbidden in the law), Saul

made an altar to the Lord ; and in the chapter from which the text is taken, we read that when Saul had heard Samuel's message to him, declaring that God had rejected him from being king, he entreated Samuel to turn with him, that he might worship the Lord God. There were indeed terrible blots in his character ; his persecution of David for mere jealousy was base and wicked cruelty : nevertheless, when we read his sad history, how the evil spirit from God troubled him, how he was rejected from the high place to which God had called him, and lastly how he died by falling on his own sword, we can scarcely fail of being moved with pity for one who was so great and so unhappy.

And yet it would seem that the character of Saul was exceedingly hateful in the sight of God. We have no more striking example in Scripture of a man deserted by God's Holy Spirit, and allowed to take his own way. "The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul."\* And for this very reason, that the character of Saul seems likely rather to excite our pity than our detestation, it will be well for us to look into it a little more closely, and see if there is not much warning to be taken from it : perhaps we may find on examination, that we are ourselves more like to Saul

\* 1 Sam. xvi. 14.

than we usually imagine, and, though by God's grace we may be saved from such a forlorn state as was his, yet the temper of mind which was his ruin may have gone far towards weakening our religion, and hindering us in our heavenward course.

It will be quite enough for us to consider the conduct of Saul in the history contained in the chapter from which I have chosen the text. Saul was commanded by God to go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites: this was a plain command; there was no exception made; the Amalekites and all they had were to be destroyed. But Saul *did not obey*; "Saul and the people," we read, "spared the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and of the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them."\* When Samuel accused Saul of this act of disobedience, Saul excused himself by saying, that "the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord God." Perhaps he thought that Samuel would scarcely blame him for what was done, when he heard that the flocks had been spared only to be sacrificed more solemnly to God; if Saul had reserved anything for himself, he would not have

\* 1 Sam. xv. 21.

expected to stand excused, but how could Samuel find fault with what he had done, when he had merely broken through the letter of the command by reason of his extreme desire to do honour to the Lord? Perhaps the excuse of sacrificing to God was only a false one, the history seems to lead us to suppose that Saul had allowed the people to take spoil for themselves; but of this Samuel says nothing, he grounds his reply on something altogether different; he grants that the flocks and herds were really and truly kept for sacrifice to God, and then says in the words of the text, "Hath God as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold! to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

In these words are contained a lesson, which Saul had never learnt. He served God and appeared zealous in His cause, so far as the way of doing this suited his own pleasure and purposes; "all that was *vile* and *refuse*" of the goods of the Amalekites, "that he destroyed utterly;" but whenever self had to be denied, and God's will made the rule of action instead of his own, then he rebelled. Even in the apparently religious act of worshipping God, after the severe rebuke which Samuel inflicted on him, his words are, "Honour *me* now, I pray thee, before the elders

of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord thy God," his own honour seems to have been that which prompted him to worship, and not sorrow for his sin. In fact Saul never really worshipped God at all, he worshipped *self*, and he never learnt this great and important truth, that obedience to God is the only thing pleasing in His eyes, and that whatever a man may do from motives of selfishness, yea though he fight God's battles and advance His religion, it is all displeasing in His sight, "who seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

The subject then which is brought before us by the text is this, that simple obedience to God's commands is the only thing which is really pleasing in His sight. And if you consider that forgetfulness of this was clearly marked in Saul's character, you will see that I was right in what I said just now, namely, that we may perhaps be more nearly like Saul than we should wish to believe, and that therefore his history is worthy of our attentive consideration. For you must observe that Saul was not an open rebel; when he was commanded to go against the Amalekites, he went, and when he saw Samuel he said, "Blessed be thou of the Lord, I have performed the commandment of the Lord."

And part of the command he certainly had performed; in fact he had performed it just so far as it required no self-denial; for Saul was a warrior and fond of war, and there was nothing against his inclination in making war on his enemies; but when it came to a question of saving or destroying the goodly flocks and herds which the people wished to preserve, then he feared the people rather than God, and suffered God's commandments to be broken through; and therefore he failed in his obedience to God, just at the very point where the real trial of his obedience began. And so may Saul stand to us as a type of those who profess to be Christians, and act in a measure as Christians, and who nevertheless follow their own ways, just as though they were under no Christian vows at all. There are many, (and each of us should examine himself lest *he* be in that position,) who will attend to religion so far as suits their own inclination, who will love God whenever that love does not interfere with the love of self, but have never learnt the great Gospel lesson of obedience, nor seen that obedience to God requires denial and discipline of ourselves.

Let us look at one or two examples of great and holy men in Scripture, and see how the example of obedience was set by them.

Remember Abraham, and how he was proved



and found faithful. First he was commanded to leave his country and his father's house, and to journey into a strange land. Abraham obeyed and "went out, not knowing whither he went."\* Then he was commanded to offer his son as a burnt-offering to God; a hard trial of flesh and blood; yet Abraham never once murmured, but prepared himself to obey.

Moses was ordered by God to go and appear in His name before Pharaoh, and though it was a dangerous mission, and he felt himself unfitted for the work, yet he obeyed.

The holy Apostles also were simply called by Christ, and commanded to follow Him, and they obeyed.

But why should I quote other examples, when we have that of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom we read that He "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;"† and He tells us Himself, "I came to do, not my own will, but the will of Him which sent me:"‡ and were not His words in the garden of Gethsemane, "Father, not my will, but Thine be done;" yea, what was our blessed Saviour's whole life but one practical sermon, teaching us that obedience to God and not the worshipping of self, that self-sacrifice and not self-indulgence, are the high objects which are

\* Heb. xi. 8.

† Philipp. ii. 8.

‡ S. John vi. 38.

proposed for every man to follow after, and the attainment of which is the great purpose for which he was created?

You may observe also, Christian Brethren, that Abraham and Moses, whom I have quoted as two eminent examples of obedience, are two of those whom the Apostle has mentioned in his catalogue of men of *faith*.\* In fact, faith and obedience are necessary parts of each other; there can be no obedience without faith, and faith without obedience is dead. And it is easy to see that Saul was a man without faith; for we read,† how that he offered sacrifice to God which he was not commanded to do, because Samuel was not present exactly at the appointed time; and this was want of faith, for Samuel had promised to come; if Saul had really believed that Samuel would come, and had had confidence in God's protection, he would not through fear have been driven to offer sacrifice. And so, in our case, if we really and truly believe all that God has told us, if we believe His threatenings and trust in His promises, if in fact we really dread hell and hope for heaven, how shall we willingly be guilty of disobedience?

The duty of obedience is put in a very high place by the text, when it tells us that obedience is better than sacrifice. You will observe, that

\* Heb. xi.

† 1 Sam. xiii. 9.

Saul made God's service the excuse for breaking His commands: to make offerings to God was no more than it was his duty to do, but then it was not to be done at the expense of a still higher duty: no sacrifice however costly could possibly make amends for breaking God's law in one single point: to break His command under the pretence of serving Him and doing Him honour, was but to make religion the cloke of sin, and to neglect the greater for the sake of performing the less; like the Pharisees in the time of our Lord, who gave tithes of the meanest herbs, and omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and truth.

And, Christian Brethren, has not this been so from the beginning? When Adam and Eve were placed in the garden of Eden, they were not placed there without a law: the command given them was simple indeed, but still it *was* a command, by keeping of which only they could stand; had Adam offered never so many sacrifices, and called never so much on the name of the Lord, yet if he eat of the forbidden tree he was guilty: and the very simplicity of the command shews us that it was not given for its own sake, that is, it was not given merely for the sake of preventing Adam from eating of that tree, but as a test of his obedience; God never made men to be their own

masters, there is no hint in Scripture of that proud independence of which man is by nature so fond, on the other hand he is always spoken of as owing allegiance to God, and he has never been without a law, which he is both commanded and encouraged to keep unbroken.

And this great truth it is the more important to bear in mind, because some have said, that since Christ has come we are no longer under a law. It is true that the law of Moses is done away in Christ, but the eternal laws of God are neither for Jew nor Gentile, but for every man; nay, so far from the law of obedience being done away by the Gospel, I will shew you that the commands of God are more strongly bound upon us than ever; for if it be true, that "to whom much is given, of them will much be required," will not much more be required at *our* hands, who have received so much clearer revelations of God's will, who have heaven so clearly laid open to us, and who have the Holy Spirit given us to assist our infirmities? So far from the death of our Lord being a reason why we should not obey God's law, it is the very most powerful argument to enforce the duty of obedience; for it enables S. Paul to tell us that we are not our own, but bought with a price, and therefore that we have no *right* to use our members in the service of sin

and the Devil: and whereas, without Christ, it would be our duty to obey God, because He made us and not we ourselves, the death of Christ lays upon us a new obligation, as being not only created but redeemed; and if there be anything precious in that blood, which after the example of Scripture\* we venture with reverence to call the *blood of God*, and if the salvation bought with it be so great that nothing else could obtain it, then we have as Christians the claims not only of duty but of gratitude, to induce us to give ourselves up body, soul, and spirit to do God's will.

Call to mind also, Christian Brethren, that our daily prayer to the Father is, "*Thy will be done.*" We do not pray that our own wishes may be gratified, but that *God's will* may be performed; and yet this is hypocrisy, if we always in fact follow our own ways and will.

And, besides all this, let us never forget that we have the vows of our baptism upon us. We vowed then, and have often renewed the vow since, that we would fight against sin, the world, and the Devil, that we would not be led by them; and we were marked as God's faithful soldiers and servants. And therefore to us, as baptized members of Christ's Church, the choice is no longer open whether we will obey or not: I cannot say

\* Acts xx. 28.

to you, as Joshua did to the Israelites, "choose ye whom ye will serve," for you have already pledged yourselves and vowed obedience; and he who, having enlisted himself as a soldier, refuses to obey his captain, is but a rebel and must be treated as such.

In speaking of obedience to God's laws I have not, of course, so much in view the great moral laws: I do not suppose that any one here would think himself free to break *them*; no one would fancy that he might murder or steal; but obedience to God is something much more than this. I spoke just now of our baptismal vows, and how we were received as the *soldiers* of Christ; and this comparison of a Christian to a soldier will shew us very well what our obedience ought to be; for a soldier has no will of his own, indeed his very first and principal lesson is that of obedience; by enlisting himself a soldier he at once gives up his right to act as he pleases, and hereafter, whatever service of danger he may be called upon to perform, yea though he be commanded to face certain death, he has no choice but to obey. This is the kind of obedience *we* are to yield; it is not an occasional act of obedience which we are called upon to do, it is a constant battle against ourselves, and against the evil nature within us, and a constant striving to root out all

desires and thoughts which are contrary to the will of God.

Perhaps I am presenting here the sterner face of religion ; nevertheless, though it be not so pleasant to think of what we owe to God, as to speak of what He has done for us, yet it is for our good to keep in mind the vows and obligations which are upon us, and to remember that our Christian profession does mean something, that fighting against sin does mean something, and that to be a soldier of Christ is not merely a matter of words, but something very real and substantive indeed. And it is also well to remember, that if we find the path in which we are walking quite smooth and pleasant, if there is nothing which contradicts our wills, and if we never find it necessary to deny ourselves, then we ought to fear lest we should be on the wrong road, and lest, while we fancy ourselves to be God's servants, we should find that all the while we have been pleasing ourselves.

And let us bear in mind that every act of obedience to God makes the next act more easy ; the more readily we bear Christ's yoke the easier will it become ; every sin forsaken, every evil temper conquered, every unholy habit broken, is a step towards that place where obedience will be willing and perfect. Yea, Christian Brethren,



the happiness of angels and blessed spirits is obedience; they ever do God's pleasure, and so doing they perform their own also, for their will is His.

## SERMON XIII.

### CONTEMPT OF MOSES AND THE PROPHETS.

S. LUKE xvi. 31.

If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

THIS verse is the last of the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus; it is a lesson drawn from that parable, and though not the only one, it is so important that it is quite sufficient for our consideration at this time, without going into all the points brought before us by the parable. Nevertheless, in order to make the subject quite clear, it will be as well to notice two or three things in the parable itself, and the more so as perhaps in one or two respects we are likely to fall into error.

In the first place let us observe, that there is no reason to suppose that the rich man treated Lazarus with extraordinary unkindness: we read that Lazarus desired to be fed with the crumbs

which fell from the rich man's table, but we do not find that the rich man refused them; it is true that he ought to have done much more for the poor beggar, than merely allow him the crumbs which were of no use to himself, for there was very little charity in this; he ought to have taken him to his house, and bound up those wounds which the very dogs in the street were free to lick: but still this want of charity to the poor is not the point in the rich man's character, which it is the special design of the parable to bring before us. This want of charity was only one way in which a radical defect shewed itself; and it was this defect, this rottenness at the heart, and not the peculiar cruelty to Lazarus, which rendered him fit for the fire of hell.

Then again, we are not to fancy that Lazarus when he died was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom, *merely* because he was wretched here. This is an error into which we might perhaps be led by one expression used in the parable; for we read that "Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Larazus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented;"\* from this verse we may fairly conclude that happiness here is no warrant for happiness hereafter, as also that

\* S. Luke xvi. 25.

we are not to suppose that God has forgotten or ceased to care for those whom in His good providence He has afflicted here; and many a man who is under God's heavy hand, whether by sickness, by extreme poverty, by bereavement, or by any other means, may comfort himself that angels are waiting round him, ready to carry him to heaven as soon as death has set him free from the prison of the flesh; but the notion that God will make up in another life to all for the pains they have suffered here, and that affliction here may be set against sin and so save a man from punishment hereafter, is heretical and dangerous. Afflictions may make fit for heaven, but they can never purchase it; and if the poor are in a peculiar manner heirs of heaven, as our Saviour said in His sermon on the mount, it is not because they have had less enjoyment here, but because they are more likely to be poor in spirit, and are more free from those temptations and cares which render it so hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Yet, on the other hand, we are not to suppose that the rich man came short of heaven, solely and merely because he was rich. Had he used his wealth aright, had he fed the hungry and clothed the naked, had he laid up "treasure in heaven where rust and moth do not corrupt and

where thieves do not break through nor steal," instead of laying up treasure on earth, faring sumptuously every day, and leaving Lazarus the crumbs, had he done this, his riches would have been a blessing to him, and instead of losing them when he died he would have received them tenfold in heaven. God will never be in man's debt, and "he that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord; and look, what he layeth out, it shall be paid him again."\* Money is only an instrument in the hand of God, and may be used to promote His glory; it is one of those talents of which we read in the parable as being distributed differently to different men, to some ten, to some five, and to some only one: and you may remember, that in that parable it was not the man with the *ten* talents, but he with the *one*, who was punished for neglect of his duty; in this instance the possession of the *ten* talents was a tenfold blessing; and in the case of the rich man before us, his money also might have been a blessing, and might have gained him a rich reward. So that, as I said, it was not simply because he was rich, and because he fared sumptuously every day, that he became so miserable in hell; and though it is wrong to suppose that God necessarily loves a man more because He has been pleased to make

\* Prov. xix. 17.

him rich, yet it is equally wrong to believe that these gifts are signs of wrath, and that God's goodness will be less in another world in proportion as it is great in this.

What then was it that was fatal to the eternal happiness of this rich man? There was, as I have said, a radical defect in his character, and it is one from which all of us, both rich and poor, may take warning: *he did not make the best of the advantages given him.* I say, he did not make the best of the advantages given him: it pleased God to put him in a certain position in the world, and to give him plenty, and it pleased God to put Lazarus in another position, and to give him poverty; this was God's doing, but then it depended on themselves to use the advantages given, and if Lazarus used his one talent well, he would be far more pleasing in the eyes of God than the rich man who misused his ten.

In order to see that this really was the nature of the rich man's sins, let us look at the prayer which he made for his brothers, who were probably such as himself, and Abraham's answer to him. When the rich man finds that there is no hope for himself, he begs that at least Lazarus may be sent to his father's house, to warn his brethren, lest they too come to misery. This request is refused, and why? because they had Moses and the pro-

phets: now these men were Jews, and the books of Moses and the prophets formed their holy Scriptures, they were their Bible, and they were the voice of God speaking to them, they were a light to their feet to lead them in the right way; but to this message of God they had not attended, they were like the seed, in the parable of the Sower, which fell among thorns, for the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches had, as our Saviour says, *choked* the word, and made it unfruitful. You see then that they had despised their privileges, they had not made the best use of their talents, and this being the case, what right had they to expect that more would be given them? But their brother argues, that if one went to them from the dead, they certainly would repent; if Lazarus were to appear to them again, not as a beggar to ask their crumbs, but as a glorified saint, and were to tell them what he had seen and how their poor brother had begged in vain for a drop of water to cool his tongue, then certainly they could be careless no longer, but must repent of their ways and turn to God. This reasoning seems plausible enough, but Abraham, instead of listening to it, cuts it short with the astounding words of the text, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." I call



these *astounding* words; because, though we might have supposed that God would never cause a resurrection from the dead for the conversion of those who despise His message, we should perhaps scarcely have expected that such a resurrection would be in vain; yet such is the meaning of the text; it does not say, "if men hear not Moses and the prophets, God will not convince them by a resurrection from the dead," but it says, "they would *not* be convinced, even though one *did* rise from the dead.

Hence then I conclude that the radical defect in this rich man, that which was the root of all his sin and the cause of all his woe, was that he did not use his advantages; he despised Moses and the prophets; he had a talent given him and he buried it in a napkin. And this being the case, we shall not be so much surprised at the words of the text, if we think well upon them: for the books of Moses and the prophets told the rich man of his duty quite as clearly as Lazarus could have done if he had returned from the dead; they told him that he was to love God above all things and his neighbour as himself, and they told him also that God was a jealous God, and one who would in no wise spare the guilty; and if he shut his ears to this, what reason have we to think that a man returned from the dead would have greater

powers of persuasion? For it is not as though there were something of which a man had to be convinced, and of which a resurrection from the dead would be a proof; there is a voice within every man, which tells him what is right and condemns what is wrong, and when this is stifled by selfishness and sin, no voice from the grave can supply its place.

But why do I speak of what is likely? let us come to fact: and I will give you two illustrations of the truth asserted in the text, one from history, and one from our own experience.

The first was probably alluded to by our Lord when He spoke the words of the text. The Jews had had the advantage of hearing our Saviour's preaching and seeing His miracles; and though some few were convinced and followed Him, yet as a whole they rejected Him; they said that He performed His miracles by the help of the Devil, and as for His preaching they had no ears for it: they were always wanting some proof of His Godhead beyond what was given them; "Master," they said, "we would see a sign from Thee:"—sign? what sign would they have? the blind were made to see, the deaf heard, the lame walked, the dead were raised up; but they did not like to bend their necks, and confess themselves His disciples: He preached humility and they were proud, He

preached repentance and they thought themselves good enough already, and so they endeavoured to lull their consciences by persuading themselves that they wanted some further proof of His mission. These Jews then were exactly in the position of the rich man who despised Moses and the prophets; they despised God's message to them: now let us see how they will be affected, if one were to rise from the dead. I suppose that if our blessed Lord had asked the Jews, whether they would consider His resurrection from the dead to be a full proof of His Godhead, they would have replied, Yes: and yet this very proof, which would seem to be the strongest that could be given, was given with as little effect as all the rest. Christ did rise from the dead, and the only effect was that the Jews bribed the soldiers to say that He was stolen while they slept. The fact is they had stifled conviction all along, they had done violence to the sacred voice of conscience, which told them that no man ever spake or did works like Christ, and so they had got as it were on the wrong road, and the further they went the further they were from the truth. And I say that when our Lord spoke the words of the text, He probably had in view His own resurrection; at all events it forms a remarkable example of the great truth which I am insisting upon, namely, that they who refuse

to hear Moses and the prophets, that is, who despise their advantages whatever they may be, will be just as obstinate and deaf if a preacher rise for them from the dead.

Let us now take a second example, from our own experience. How often has a man who has led a life of riot and excess, or who has lived in utter forgetfulness of God and worshipping of self, been laid by God's providence on a sick-bed: he is very near death, and, when he can no longer follow his own pleasures, his past life rises before him as a gloomy picture, he feels that he has been spending his strength for that which does not profit, and his treasure on earth is gone to the moths and rust, while he has laid up no treasure in heaven. And now he will cry for mercy, and vow that if God will but spare his life he will repent and amend; he seems sincere in his vows, perhaps he really feels so, but let us wait till he has been restored to health, and we shall see that he is as bad or worse than before; the evil spirit has returned into him with seven spirits more evil than itself, and the last end of that man is worse than the first. For he too has stifled convictions; he knew as well before his severe visitation as after it, that the wages of sin is death, he was but frightened by seeing hell so near him, and the only reason why he made up

his mind to leave sin was because the opportunities of sin had left him; the appetite was there, but what was there to call it forth on a sick-bed? in short he had despised Moses and the prophets, and so even his own resurrection from the dead was powerless to turn him from Satan to God. This is not an uncommon case, and it is one which frequently surprises those who see it; but does it not exactly answer to the words of our text, and shew that there is deep practical truth lying in them? it signifies not what may stand to us in the place of Moses and the prophets; all our advantages stand to us in the same relation in which Moses and the prophets did to the rich man, and if we will not hear them, as we have no right to expect any other help, so also have we no right to believe that if it were granted, it would do anything else but increase our condemnation.

Now, Christian Brethren, let us see how we can apply this subject more particularly to ourselves. Some advantages we have all in common; we have all the public prayers of the Church, we have all the Holy Spirit striving within us and convincing us of sin and of righteousness, we have all our Bibles which we can read, we may all partake if we will of the holy Sacrament of Christ's body and blood; these and such as these are our "Moses and the prophets," they are the

voice of God speaking to us, and telling us of the beauty of holiness, the ugliness of sin, of the glories of heaven, and the horrors of hell. Do we want any other voice? nay, if we shut our ears to these, a voice from the grave would be in vain.

Then also there are some advantages which are not common to all: one man has wealth and plenty, and another has poverty; and the rich man sometimes thinks that much excuse should be made for him, because the position in which he has been placed brings so many cares upon him, while the poor man thinks that little can be expected from him because he is not learned, and that if he were in the place of the rich he would serve God better. But why so? the very trial of all men consists not in what they would do if they were something else than they are, but in working out their salvation in the place which God has assigned them: and if a man does violence to his conscience in one station of life, the same disease will shew itself under some form or another, if his position in the world be changed. He has refused to hear the Moses and the prophets whom God has given him, and why should Lazarus have greater power than they?

Therefore, Christian Brethren, let us ever bear

in mind that this is a state of trial; we did not make ourselves, but God made us, and has assigned to each of us his place, and his work which he is to do. But the same message of repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ has come to us all, and it is for us to attend to it: and if we shut our ears and harden our hearts to such messages as this, we have put ourselves into such an attitude of resistance to God, and have so injured our own perceptions of right and wrong, have so blinded our eyes to that light which lighteth every man who comes into the world, that no miracle, not even a resurrection from the dead, will have any power to convince.

God save us, Christian Brethren, from falling into this state, and give us grace to improve His mercies to the salvation of our souls, for Jesus Christ's sake!



## SERMON XIV.

### THE HARDENING POWER OF SIN.

JEREMIAH xxxvi. 24.

Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words.

THE prophet Jeremiah lived in very troublous times; he had, committed to him by God, the most dangerous and thankless of all offices, that of reproofing his brethren, and warning them of the judgments of God. He lived, as you know, at the time when the Jews were for their sins given up by God to the king of Babylon, and suffered to be carried away as slaves: the Jews had for a long time been going on in very sinful ways; the Books of Kings tell us how one king after another did wickedly, how the service of God was forgotten, how there was idolatrous worship set up, and how the whole nation appeared to have forgotten God. Thus they brought down judgment on their own heads, and at length God gave them

up and allowed their enemies to lead them away captive. But before this happened the prophet Jeremiah was sent to warn the nation of what was about to happen: we read of his ordination in the first chapter of the prophecy, where the Lord says to him, "Before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." We cannot wonder that Jeremiah felt himself unfit for such an office, and answered, "Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak, for I am a child;" but the Lord reproved him, "Say not, I am a child, for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces; for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord." And so in the strength of God Jeremiah began his work, and preached to the king and people, warning them of the sure consequences of their sins, telling them with an honest plainness, which they could not bear, the iniquity of their lives, and assuring them that the king of Babylon would come upon them, to conquer them and carry them away.

Now we find that in the fourth year of king Jehoiachim, which was about twenty years after Jeremiah was ordained a prophet, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, and Jeremiah being himself in confinement sent for Baruch the scribe,

and dictated to him the message of God, desiring him to go and read it in the ears of the people when they were collected in the temple on the great day of atonement. So Baruch read the message to the people, and it was like the other messages, namely one of wrath and judgment, if the people would not repent and serve God. The king himself was not there to hear the message, but the princes went to him and told him what had been done, and the king sent to fetch the book in which the message was written; and they brought it and read it to the king. One would have thought that it must have made him tremble, but instead of that, as soon as three or four leaves had been read the king cut it with a knife and burnt it; "yet," says the text, "they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words."

Now how was this,—for this is the point I wish to discuss at this time, how was it that after such a message, and after adding to their former sins this new and fearful one of burning the word of God, neither the king nor his servants, nor any that heard the words were afraid? Perhaps, you may say, they thought Jeremiah an impostor, and did not believe that the message was from God. This is one thing which may be said, but I think

it will not hold, for you will read\* a few verses before the text that the princes desired Jeremiah and Baruch to hide themselves, and they would scarcely have taken this care of them unless they believed in their hearts that they were true men and sent from God: if they had thought them mere impostors, they would have punished them outright. Nor was it so easy to mistake a prophet: a poor man wandering without friends, and from time to time pouring forth such language as none else was master of, and giving up everything for the privilege of warning his thankless countrymen amidst insult and persecution of coming calamities, bore too many marks of reality to be easily confounded with an impostor or a madman. Moreover we know certainly that Zedekiah, who reigned soon after Jehoiachim, believed Jeremiah to be a true prophet of the Lord. I think therefore we must not try to explain the conduct of the king and his servants, by supposing that they did not believe Jeremiah to be a prophet; if this were the true explanation the text would give us no lesson, because of course the king would treat with contempt a message from one whom he believed to be an impostor: but I do not think this was his belief, and it is on this account that I think there is so much for us to learn from the text. It is just

\* Jer. xxxvi. 19.

because the king and his servants did not disbelieve the mission of Jeremiah and the reality of his message, that their example may be a fearful warning for us.

But is it conceivable that men who believed Jeremiah to be a prophet of God should despise his words? is it credible that, after preaching for twenty years, those who listened to him should think him a prophet, and yet throw his sermons in the fire? Christian Brethren, I am afraid this is very conceivable and very credible: I see nothing in it a whit more incredible than in this, that men who profess to believe the Gospel, who dare not deny the Bible to be the word of God, should know what is right and not do it, that they should have warning of a far more fearful captivity than that which was coming on the Jews, and yet should never tremble. In fact there is nothing more difficult to conceive of in the conduct of Jehoiachim and his servants, than there is in the conduct of more than half the people of this land. For men know what is right, they know how they ought to live, and they know what is coming upon them, and how they shall be judged according to their works; and yet, notwithstanding all this, how few are there who tremble, and how many who, like the king of Judah and his servants, "neither are afraid, nor rend their garments." The conduct

therefore which we read of in the text seems to be nothing out of the way, nothing strange, nothing which we cannot enter into and cannot explain, but only an instance of what goes on now, and always has gone on since the beginning of the world; it is an instance of the *hardening power of sin*. The king of Judah and his people were not in the condition of men who had been sinning in ignorance, and to whom a sudden message had come from God to warn them to repent; had this been the case they would probably have been startled and alarmed, like the people of Nineveh at the preaching of Jonah: they had no excuse of this kind, they had been deliberately disobeying God in spite of the warnings of Jeremiah, they had sinned against light, as we say, and so they had become blinded and hardened. At first probably, when they heard the prophet, they felt that they were living wickedly and made resolutions to amend, but by-and-bye temptation came again and they gave way; then once more they would hear the warning voice, but somehow it would not this time be so terrible, and so its calls would get fainter and fainter, while in the same proportion the habit of sin got stronger and stronger, and conscience more and more blinded; and thus, strange to say, a time came at last when the most fearful threats of vengeance seemed mere idle words; the

king of Judah heard the message of God, but it produced upon him no kind of wholesome effect, it never cost him a moment's uneasiness, he burnt the book and then went on as before. Christian Brethren, is it difficult to find examples of the like thing now? of men who by little and little fall from one sin to another, who have been taught as children the way of God and have been told of heaven and hell, and so are scared at first when they think that "the wages of sin is death;" but by-and-bye this truth seems to lose its edge, sin has gained more hold, and Satan has said as he did to Eve, "Ye shall not surely die;" one sin leads to another, and each seems easier than the one before it; things which once appeared frightful now seem simple and familiar, and thus after a time the man becomes hardened; he has not reasoned upon the matter and come to the conclusion that sin is *not* sure to bring death, he has become an altered man simply through his acts; and so we have the strange fact of a man brought into such a state that he does not fear hell, *because* he has led a wicked life: this I say is the strange thing, that the men who do most to deserve hell tremble at it the least, the effect of a life of sin has been to lead them not to despair but to utter indifference.

And this, Christian Brethren, is the most fearful character of sin; this is what makes a little sin,



or a little neglect of duty, enormously great when considered as the seed of a whole crop of sins afterwards, even as a single seed of the wrong kind may be enough to overrun a field with thistles. If a sin could stand by itself, though it would then be unspeakably awful to have offended against God, yet it would be trifling and not to be named in comparison with sin such as it really is; for a single sin is the leader of a whole band, and when once the barrier has been broken a legion of others swarm in; and a single sin is the beginning of the hardening process, the beginning of a state of disease which ends in utter blindness and want of feeling.

And this is what is meant in Scripture, when we read of persons being *hardened*. Pharaoh was hardened, he despised message after message, till at last he pursued the people of the Lord and perished; the Jews in the time of our Lord were hardened, and so even the preaching of the Son of God had no effect upon them, they knew what was right and did it not, and so at last they became blind. You may remember also, that the Apostle gives the warning, "Exhort one another daily, while it is called *to-day*; lest any of you be *hardened* through the deceitfulness of sin."\* Persons, you will observe, do not become hardened

\* Heb. iii. 13.

in general by at once committing gross and palpable pieces of wickedness, but sin insinuates itself gradually and deceitfully; the first sin is like the fine end of a wedge which opens the way for the remainder; for I suppose that there was a time when even the most wicked man would have trembled at sin; a murderer, for instance, never begins his wicked life with murder, but with some sin apparently trifling, such as speaking profanely, or not going to church, or allowing himself in bad tempers. This is what the confession of many criminals confirms, they trace their wretchedness back to some much smaller sin committed when young: a boy disobeys his parents, and perhaps would not believe you if you told him that he had taken one step towards the gallows; and yet this may be true, and indeed many a criminal has traced back his guilt to not obeying his mother: the breaking of the fifth commandment thus leads to the breaking of all the remaining ones. This I understand by the *deceitfulness* of sin, to which the Apostle refers its hardening power; it is deceitful, because what we call a small sin appears trifling, because we judge of sins merely in themselves, without considering to what they lead: if in a war a general were to see a few of the enemy's soldiers straggling over the hills, he *might* say that they were

so few that they were not worth considering, but *would* he say so? or would he not rather look upon them as the forerunners of a great army, would he not prepare at once to resist the host of enemies which he must know lurked behind? In like manner the sins of childhood are the forerunners of the great army of the world, the flesh, and the devil, which comes up in maturer years, and the only safe course is to look upon no sin as trifling, but to root out every enemy whether small or great, lest perhaps we allow our enemy to gain such strength as shall end in our overthrow.

But what I have just been saying may seem to refer chiefly to great crimes, from which we may humbly trust we shall be preserved: there is much in the present state of society to prevent us committing very grievous crimes; nevertheless the character of sin is the same, the same hardening deceitful character belongs to every neglect of duty however small; and to make this appear clearly I shall take a few examples.

We will consider first the case of a man who seldom or never goes to church. Now I suppose the reason such a man would give is, that he does not see the use of it. This is a question I need not discuss now, but what I wish to ask is, did he always think so? most probably he had been

taught differently when a child, he had been taught that God is with His people gathered together in His Name, that our Lord Jesus Christ is there, and that to bless them; he was taught this, and he once believed it, but now he thinks he is as well at home: how has this change come about? has he reasoned about it? probably not at all: has any one for whom he has any respect told him so? certainly not: then what has changed him? it is the effect of *habit*, or, in the Apostle's words, he has been "hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." For probably his first omission was made without any intention of staying away habitually, but something kept him away, and his conscience pricked him for it; the next time a slighter reason was sufficient, and conscience did not speak so loudly; and very soon the habit has become easy, and after a year or two he does not go to church at all. And now the conscience is *seared*, as the Apostle says, and the man when warned now has no fears, he neither "trembles nor rends his garments," but protected by the hard shell of habit which has been forming about him, he is proof against every dart, though barbed with the word of God.

And what I have just said will apply almost without change to the case of a man who never prays. He was taught to pray as a child, and

perhaps he continues the practice, till at length, because he does not act up to his prayers, he finds the practice tiresome, and so he finds an excuse in want of time, or fatigue, or something of the kind, to omit prayer occasionally; but he does not give it up altogether, he is only careless and irregular, but then he grows more careless and more irregular, and yet the omission costs him less and less pain, till at last the time comes when he forgets God altogether, and so starves his soul to death. Yet he "never trembles nor rends his garments," and the desperate wickedness of living without God in the world, and receiving the blessings of God, like a beast, without offering up thanks and praise, costs him far less pain of conscience than the single act of omission which was the beginning of his ruin. Here is the hardening power of sin.

Or again, what shall we say of those who continually hear of their duty, and do not do it, or at all events do it in a very stinted degree? Is it not strange that a rich man should have no feeling for his poor brethren, that he should read that it is "hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven," that "he who giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord," and that the love of God cannot dwell in him who shutteth up his compassion against his brother in need, yet should

never steer his conduct according to these guides? Of course it cannot be denied that there are such persons; how have they come to this state? by *habit*. No man is merciless and uncharitable all at once, he becomes so by little and little, till at last he is buried in a grave of selfishness, and then all the commands of the Gospel are unheard. Thus it is that men become so different in their characters that you can reckon upon their acts; there is, we will suppose, some painful case of distress, and you are able to say beforehand that if presented to one man it will be relieved, and if presented to another it will be neglected. And yet these men are made of the same flesh, and in matters not religious may probably agree in their judgment; but in a case of this kind their *character* comes in, that character which has been formed little by little from all the acts of their lives, and the result is that one man is just and kind and liberal, being scarcely aware of it himself, and another is niggardly and churlish, not because he thinks it right to be so, but because he has become hardened.

Once more: if we were asked why it was that so very many persons professing to be Christians, and being moreover regular attendants at church, and in many ways wishing to walk with God, I say if we were asked why so many never

receive the holy Sacrament of Christ's body and blood, must we not be driven for an answer to the hardening power of sin? It may seem harsh to speak of the power of *sin* in such case, but, Christian Brethren, every breach of known duty is sin, and he who never attends the Lord's Table is committing sin: it would be no kindness to any one to call disobedience to a positive command of Christ by any other name. I say then that when we find a man, who professes to wish to obey the law of God, breaking through a command which is as clear as words can be, and at the same time neglecting the greatest privilege which God has given to His Church, we can only explain it by saying that by degrees the mind has become so perverted and hardened that words have no effect. The words "do this in remembrance of me" seem like words of no meaning, they are qualified, or in some way they are got over, and the result is that more than half, in some cases nearly the whole of a congregation walk away in the middle of the service as regularly as the day of Communion comes; yet they are not "afraid neither rend their garments."

Christian Brethren, again I say here lies the deadly character of sin, here is the strange deceitful nature of disobedience, that the mere habit



of disobedience renders us callous; the continual hearing without doing renders us at last deaf; the continual sight of the Lord Jesus Christ crucified amongst us, but only gazed at without being really followed, at last renders us blind; continual resistance to the motions of God's Holy Spirit at last drives that Holy Spirit away; continual slothfulness in doing our duty at last renders our bodies weak and our limbs stiff, so that we cannot move. It is a fearful thing to think that we may come to this, and I have shewn you that it is not only in the case of desperate criminals, but that in every condition, even in that of persons professedly walking in the ways of Christ, the same thing holds. It is a thing for every one of us to think over and pray over, whether we are in all things following God without reserve, and whether there may not be some point in which we are falling very grievously short, but to which habit has hardened us. Judge therefore yourselves, Brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord, and if you find yourselves out in any such omission do not be surprised if you find it hard to amend: habits are not easily broken; and there are some evil spirits which, as our Lord tells us, go out only by prayer and fasting. If a person of maturer years has never been at the Table of the Lord

he will find it hard to begin, this will be one punishment of his neglect; but the life of the soul is not to be sacrificed for ease, therefore let him rouse himself and try. And indeed, Christian Brethren, it is not as though we fought in our own strength, if it were so we might indeed despair of success; but for what purpose has the Holy Spirit been given to us, if not for this, to help our infirmities? how are we better off than heathen or Jews, if it be not that we are no longer under the law? what is the blessing of the Gospel but this, that sin shall not have dominion over us? and for what purpose did the Son of God come from heaven, but to make us free from sin, and servants of God?

We may well tremble to think of our condition, if we listen to God's warnings, and do not attend to them, if we hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and do not in earnest take Him for our Master and endeavour with heart and soul to serve Him. For verily there is such a thing as being *Gospel-hardened*; there is such a thing as listening to God's word, and to preaching without doing, until the sound of the most solemn truths becomes as useless as that of a tinkling cymbal, until the sword of the Spirit is unable to cut or pierce. This I call being Gospel-hardened, that is, hearing the Gospel till it has ceased to have

any effect: and persons who have become thus are like the king of Judah and his servants, who hear the threatened vengeance of Almighty God, and yet are not afraid nor rend their garments. It had been better for us to have been born Turks or Pagans, than thus to receive God's grace in vain. Pray, Christian Brethren, to God our Father, to give us grace that we may never come to this!

## SERMON XV.

### WISDOM.

#### PROVERBS ii. 1—5.

My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee;

So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding;

Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures;

Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.

THIS is only one passage out of many, in which wisdom is connected with religion, in which it is asserted that a religious fear of God is the first step in true wisdom, and that he who would know God aright must love wisdom, and humbly and vigorously seek after her. And the manner in which wisdom is spoken of, particularly in the writings of Solomon, is very remarkable: thus we read, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom, and with all thy getting get

understanding;”\* and again we read frequently that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;” and in the chapter from which I have taken the text, you will find that safety from the snares of the world and the flesh is attributed to the possession of wisdom. Again we read that if a young man will keep sound wisdom and discretion, they shall be “life to his soul” and “grace to his neck.” Again, “the wise shall inherit glory, but shame shall be the promotion of fools.”† Again, wisdom is represented as crying to all people in the high ways, as preaching to men, and exhorting all, whatever they do and whoever they may be, to make her their friend: and she thus speaks of herself, “By me kings reign and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth. I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me. My fruit is better than gold, yea than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver. I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment. The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was;”‡ and much more in the same place to the same effect.

And we find wisdom spoken of in the same

\* Prov. iv. 7.

† Ibid. iii. 35.

‡ Ibid. viii.

tone in the Apocryphal book called the Wisdom of Solomon, in which Solomon speaks of his love of wisdom, and how he preferred her before all wealth and besought God to bestow her upon him. He says, "I preferred her before sceptres and thrones, and esteemed riches nothing in comparison of her. Neither compared I unto her any precious stones, because all gold in respect of her is as a little sand, and silver shall be counted as clay before her. I loved her above health and beauty, and chose to have her instead of light: for the light that cometh from her never goeth out. All good things came to me together with her, and innumerable riches in her hands. And I rejoiced in them all, because wisdom goeth before them; and I knew not that she was the mother of them."\* And then he says, "Wisdom is the breath of the power of God, and a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty: therefore can no defiled thing fall into her. For she is the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of His goodness. For God loveth none but him that dwelleth with wisdom."†

Now there are many very striking things in the passages which I have quoted; wisdom, you will observe, is spoken of as a virtue, as much as

\* Wisdom vii. 8—12.

† Ibid. vii. 25, 26, 28.

truthfulness, or charity, or sobriety; it is spoken of as the gift of God, as a thing given in answer to prayer, and therefore to be prayed for, as absolutely necessary for all men who would please God; and we seem to gather that every person who has any of this wisdom is endowed with something of that mind, by which Almighty God created the heavens and the earth. Wisdom also, observe particularly, is identified with goodness; Satan is cunning enough in bringing his ends to pass, but he is not called wise; wicked men are frequently as acute as any, but they are styled in the Bible fools, as when we read that “the *fool* hath said in his heart, there is no God,”\* and again, “the companion of *fools* shall be destroyed.”† And the way in which wisdom is spoken of as being present at the creation, and being the instrument by which God made the worlds, reminds us of the expressions applied in the New Testament to Him “by whom all things were created whether visible or invisible,”‡ and who in another place is called “the Wisdom of God.”|| But on this head I shall not enlarge, because I wish principally to call your attention to the other point, the connexion between wisdom and religion, how that one is the other,

\* Psalm xiv. 1.

† Coloss. i. 16.

† Prov. xiii. 20.

|| 1 Cor. i. 24.



or at least that one cannot exist without the other.

Let me however, before pursuing the subject, observe that wisdom is spoken of in the New Testament in the same kind of way in which it is spoken of in the Old. Thus S. Paul speaks of being made *wise* unto salvation; and our Lord compares the kingdom of heaven to a marriage which was attended by ten virgins, five of whom were *wise* and five *foolish*; and again, there is one of the parables, known as the parable of the rich *fool*, in which a man, forgetting the uncertainty of life, determines to pull down his barns and build greater, and receives that message from God, "Thou *fool*, this night shall thy soul be required of thee." So also S. Paul says, "Oh, *foolish* Galatians, who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth?" and again, "We speak *wisdom* among them that are perfect," and "Christ Jesus is made unto us *wisdom*." And S. James writes, "Who is a *wise* man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of *wisdom*." And again, "The *wisdom* that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits."

These specimens are sufficient for our purpose,

though many more might be brought; they differ in many points, but they all agree in this, in attributing a certain heavenly character to real wisdom, in representing true wisdom as consisting not in the mere sharpening of the intellect, nor in mere subtilty, nor in learning, but in a devotion of all the powers of the mind to the glory of God. What they call folly is not ignorance of the maxims of the world, nor ignorance of books, but ignorance of God and ourselves: wisdom is holiness, folly is unholiness; wisdom is obedience, folly is sin; wisdom is the submission of the whole mind to God, folly is rebellion against His will. Thus wisdom is not a thing like learning, which belongs to the few and cannot be had by the many: a learned man need not be a wise man, he may be even a fool who says in his heart there is no God, and a man may be very unlearned and yet may be wise unto salvation through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet there is no confusion in the Bible when it speaks of religion thus; it may, I think, be made clear to any one, that there is a real true sense in which wisdom may be put for religion, that the God-fearing man is the wise man, and that without the fear of God it is impossible to call any man truly wise.

Let us now examine into this. And first

observe, that even taking the lowest view of things, that is only a selfish view, looking only to what is to be gained, making it only a matter of profit and loss, the religious man is the wise man. For it has often been argued, and as yet no flaw has been found in the argument, that even though a man who gives his mind to religion, and fears God, and lives by rule, and denies himself, and submits his own natural will to what he considers to be the will of God,—I say that even though this man be wrong, yet he loses nothing in the end; he has had his own happiness here, a happiness different indeed from that of a man living only for this life, and which *he* would not call happiness, but which nevertheless is to the man who has been duly trained and disciplined real substantial enjoyment; he has had peace of mind and a quiet conscience, and has ever had his future prospect brightened by hope, and has trodden the weary vale of life buoyed up by the expectation of a glorious resurrection morning; he has not allowed himself in many pleasures which others allow themselves in, but he has had his own, and such as he would not willingly exchange for theirs: thus, even supposing him to have been wrong in his expectations, what has he lost? how is he worse off than another, even though

this life only were taken into consideration? who, looking upon the world, would not on the whole say, that good men were happier than bad men, and honest men happier than knaves? But if we think of another life, which is the happier then? if the religious man be right, what becomes of the irreligious? "if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"\* Surely the case stands thus, that if the religious man be wrong he loses nothing, but if he be right the irreligious man loses his soul! Which is the wise man then, and which the fool?

Now I quite admit, that this is what may be called a low view of the subject; it is a view depending only on an appeal to man's lowest nature, his sense of self-interest; and it would be as unworthy of a man to obey God from these motives only, as it would be for a child to obey its parents merely for the sake of obtaining rewards and escaping punishment. Nevertheless it is well to see, how that, even on this view, wisdom is on the side of those who fear God, and not on the side of those who disobey Him; and perhaps also it may sometimes happen, that a man may be stirred up to his first efforts after a holy life by some such motives as these; he will find indeed very soon that there are higher

\* 1 S. Peter iv. 18.

motives, and that a Christian must serve from love and not from fear, but still the first stir may be made by a thought only of personal advantage: our Saviour seems to encourage such a view in His teaching, especially in that remarkable expression, "what shall it *profit* a man though he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"\* One can fancy a man, who has been living a life of carelessness, to be struck by such a thought as this, that he is acting like a fool, that there is no shadow of wisdom in his doings turn them which way he will, that even thinking of this life only there is folly stamped upon his ways: and I know that whatever accusation is brought against a man, he would rather have any than that of folly; and yet let him judge for himself, and see how he will evade the charge; let him put his life in any light which will shew it to advantage, and point out where its wisdom lies, and how he is acting more according to the dictates of plain sense than the godly man whom he despises. Indeed, indeed, there is no wisdom in him who fears not God; the fear of the Lord is the beginning of it, and even in this life it will bring abundant blessing and happiness to those who follow it.

But, to take another and a higher view of the subject, I will tell you why I think that religion

\* S. Mark vii. 36.

is wisdom and ungodliness folly. It is because the religious man is concerned with so far grander and more exalted things than any other man: when there are two subjects proposed to our thoughts, the one lasting, eternal, unbounded, connected with God, and heaven, and a life to come, and the holy angels, the other having reference to the present time only, and the world, and things in it which are fleeting and will soon have ceased to be, when two such subjects are proposed to a man, and he chooses the latter and determines to occupy himself with it and not to raise his mind to the first, I cannot call him wise; it seems to me that there is an essential blindness and weakness about such a man, and want of power to distinguish between great and small, a kind of imbecility resembling that of a madman who holds up a straw and thinks it a sceptre. The principal attribute of a wise discerning man is to be able to see things as they really are, to pierce through outside appearances and get at the heart of things, and not be cheated by sham outsides: a child thinks that everything is what it looks, but a man knows that many things are very different, and are like whited sepulchres full of corruption within; and therefore when a man is deceived by the show of the world, and believes its promises, and lays up his treasure here and

thinks his treasure real and safe, and cannot see that the whole is a delusion and a lie, and that he has given his money for what is not bread, and his labour for what does not satisfy, I think that the man is in reality weak in judgment and childish in his way of viewing things; I can see no wisdom in him, but quite the reverse; whatever he may think of himself, and however wise he may be in his own conceit, I am sure that Solomon would call him a fool.

Then, again, consider what man's soul is, how it stretches forth into the infinite, and soars above earth, and is ever longing for something beyond the present life, and shews by its very anxiety that it was made for something more. And is there any wisdom in fettering this noble soul, and telling it that it has no interests beyond this world, and that the body is to eat and drink and sleep, and the soul to be left uncared for altogether? is not this folly? is it not folly for a man to spend all his energies upon his less noble part, to live without raising his mind as high as he may, to indulge his animal nature and starve his spiritual? can we call him wise who virtually denies his heavenly origin, and grovels among the husks and garbage of this lower world?

And further, I would say that the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ treats of such mighty con-



cerns, its subject is so awful, the revelations it makes are so mysterious, and withal it does seem so to commend itself to us as the religion which our nature requires, that it is impossible to give the name of *wise* to him who thinks lightly of it. The Church is ever reminding us of our relation to God through His Son Jesus Christ, how that through Him we who were afar off are brought near to God, how that we are made sons of God and children of grace who once were children of wrath, how that God has now given us such means of communion with Himself and such knowledge of His ways and such assurance of favour as He never did before; the Church ever proclaims to men the way of pardon, calls them to repentance, tells them of the Holy Spirit whom God has given to help our infirmities and make us holy: men hear all this and disregard it, one is busy with his farm, and another with his merchandise, and one has this reason and another that, but somehow or other a fearful majority say, that they cannot attend to what is said: now what *wisdom* is there in this? what mark of wisdom is there in an idle contempt of a message the most important, in treating unimportant things as important, and weighty things as trifling? surely this is folly. A man who can see nothing in the revelation which God has made through his Son

to arrest his attention, nothing notable in that wonderful condescension of Almighty God taking our flesh and living and dying among us, nothing to fix his gaze in the spectacle of the Son of God raised up on a cross, nay who does not consider the life and death of Christ as *the* great event of all events that have happened since the world began,—I say that a man who sees not this must be suffering some strange mental disease, he cannot be called wise.

And you will observe that the folly is increased, when, as is generally the case, men act in the way I have described, but profess differently; that is, a man who calls himself a Christian and yet lives an altogether unchristian life, would seem to be even less wise than him who despises religion altogether. There is a kind of aggravation of folly on the part of those, who know the powers of the world to come and the greatness of the gift of mercy in Christ Jesus, and glory in their knowledge, and never reduce their knowledge to practice. And perhaps this is a phase of the disease which concerns us more than any other, for it is that to which we are most liable: I think we shall all, if we examine ourselves, accuse ourselves on this point; I think few will say that they act up to their belief, that they follow after holiness with that zeal which the value of

holiness demands, that they love Christ as much, and the world as little, as they know they ought; few will say, that they keep their eyes fixed, unswervingly fixed, on the cross of Christ, and that they measure all things by it and carry it ever about with them in their hearts, and reverence it as they know it ought to be revered. And yet we must be sensible, that so far as we fall short of our professions we are not wise men, and that we must shake off our folly and learn wisdom if we would be Christians indeed.

And this leads me to say something of the manner in which wisdom is to be obtained. You are to remark, that although wisdom is the gift of God, the text says much of the zeal and determination with which we are to seek it; "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." You see that wisdom is spoken of as a thing which must be laboured for, it is not to be sought merely for amusement, but the search is to be the very business of man's life;

there is no point more clearly laid down, none more insisted on, than the necessity of exertion in the pursuit of wisdom. And herein men oftentimes deceive themselves; they think it is an easy thing to be wise, and that if they are foolish while young, wisdom will come with years, and that there is time for growing wise yet. Alas! a man can scarcely more easily grow *wise* suddenly, than he can grow *old* suddenly: there are lessons enough in the book of God for every day of the longest life, and he who puts off learning them will find that they will press heavily upon him when he has the least power to learn. God's will is that we should grow wiser and better from our baptisms to our graves, and that it should be man's continual labour to grow more and more wise unto salvation; and he who does not always labour cripples his spiritual stature, and can never be a full-grown Christian man.

And besides, there is so much of a practical nature in the wisdom of which I speak, it is so much the result of doing, of many little acts, of habits, and so little connected with mere intellectual clearness, that it will be easily seen how very difficult it must be to acquire it suddenly. "He that will do God's will," said our Lord, "shall know of my doctrine:" this doing of God's will then is the way to wisdom, to fear God is the

beginning of it, to obey Him is the continuance of it. And there is no way of superseding this labour, a man cannot become a fullgrown Christian without going through its childhood; and I think that practically every one will have found this true, that is, he will have found in those who have habitually and quietly and unostentatiously served God for a considerable time, he will have found, I say, a discernment, an insight into things, a *wisdom* in fact, which he will not find elsewhere: a person may suddenly take up particular views, and may prate about them, or even be very earnest about them, but he will want that mature and quiet wisdom which comes from an habitual obedience to God.

Wherefore it becomes us all, Christian Brethren, to be active and energetic and constant in the pursuit of wisdom; she is not to be followed easily and indifferently, she is far too precious for that, and if we seek her so we shall never find her: we must think her more precious than rubies, and gold to be in comparison of her as a little sand; we must prefer her to honour and wealth and all that is dear to our fallen nature, and make it the thing for which we live to possess her.

And if thou doest thus, "thou shalt understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of

God;" thou shalt know something of the ways of God, so far as they may be known by mortal men; thou shalt have an insight into His more mysterious dealings; if He send thee poverty or sickness, it may surprise others, but it shall not surprise thee, for thou knowest the ways of God, and that these things are sent for thy good and to make thee wise.

And verily it is something to find the knowledge of God; in the midst of this dreary valley to have a light shining upon us and guiding us, to know something of our whereabouts, and feel assured that God who has brought us hitherto is still bringing us on, and to have a sure confidence in final victory over Satan and an entrance into everlasting glory; these things are something in a world like this, where very much is so uncertain and dark; this is a wisdom which comes from above, and is real and sterling. All other wisdom is slight as compared with this; "knowledge," as S. Paul says, "will vanish away," but the knowledge of God will never vanish away, but will expand and grow and become clearer and be perfected in heaven.

Christian Brethren, if you would be wise, think on these things; remember that the wisdom you are to seek is the result of many actions, and that almost every act tells either one way or

the other, tends either to wisdom or folly, and that therefore the acquisition of wisdom is a thing to be set about at once while you are young and vigorous, not to be put off till the best part of life is gone, and the shades of evening are closing in, and the time of work is over, and the time of rest come. “Man goeth forth to his work and to his labour till the evening;” he cannot labour then, and even for some time before he feels weary and inclined to rest; oh! what a fearful thing, when the evening is come and the work not finished or scarcely begun, when the day has been spent in idleness, and a few hours remain in which to do the work of a life. God give us all grace to work our work betimes, to learn the true wisdom, to know Him the only true God, whom to know is everlasting life!



## SERMON XVI.

### WHAT IS YOUR LIFE?

S. JAMES iv. 13—15.

Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain :

Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? it is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that.

THERE is no book of Scripture perhaps, in which are so many plain practical maxims as in the Epistle of S. James. No one who reads that Epistle can doubt, whether the Christian religion is intended to be a system which concerns our ordinary life; whether it is intended to be a thing only for certain times and places, for church, and for Sunday, and for death-beds, and other occasions when every body supposes that religion ought to be introduced, or to be a something to

carry about with us wherever we go, to be a part of ourselves, to be our guide in the most ordinary business of life, to be a continual light to us. I do not say that all Scripture has not this character, but I can conceive of a person reading such parts as some of S. Paul's Epistles, and carrying away false notions from them, as indeed we know has sometimes been the case; S. Paul dwells so much on the high mysterious doctrines of our religion, that it is only to be expected that he should use expressions which may be misinterpreted; and I think you will find, that when persons hold any peculiar views different from those which the Church teaches us to be the true and Catholic doctrine, they will usually found their belief on some interpretation which they put upon words of S. Paul. The doctrine of justification, for instance, as found in S. Paul's Epistles, may easily be misrepresented. I am not going to enter into the question, which is a long one; I only call your attention to the fact. Probably if it were not in Scripture,\* many persons would be exceedingly surprised to be told that S. Paul might be misunderstood, and his meaning wrested; but it is well to bear this in

\* See 2 S. Pet. iii. 16; in reading which verse however it is to be remembered that the antecedent to the relative "which" is not the word "epistles" but the word "things," as is evident from the original Greek: *ἐν οἷς*, not *ἐν αἰς*.

mind; it will be a key to us to understand the positiveness, with which some assert opinions which the Church declares to be false; and for ourselves it will teach us the lesson not to be wise in our own conceits, and not to set up one part of Scripture so as to make it contradict another equally clear.

I began by saying, that the Epistle of S. James possesses a remarkably simple and practical character: you will find in it more golden maxims for the guidance of your ordinary life, more little sayings which are worth remembering by heart, in order to be able to apply them at any moment, than in perhaps any part of the New Testament. I will just collect a few of them.

For a person in affliction. "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations (or *trials*), knowing this, that the trial of your faith worketh patience."\*

Again, for a person whose religion consists more in words and talk, than in action and reality, and for persons who come to church, not so much to pray as to listen to preaching. "Be ye *doers* of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."†

Again, for a person who goes to church and appears to be a religious person, and who yet

\* S. James i. 2, 3.

† Ibid. i. 22.

has not subdued his temper, but allows trifles to make him angry. "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain."\*

Again, on the question of faith and works, which has troubled the Church so much, how entirely does this little sentence go to the root of the matter, "Faith, if it have not works, is dead, being alone."†

Again, to those who are tempted by any sin, are enticed to do wrong, and do not know how to escape, or who think it is safe to parley with sin, what a golden motto is this, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."‡

Once more, for those who long for a comfortable sense of God's favour, but have not learnt that it is to be obtained by coming to God in His own way, and seeking communion with Him by prayer and sacraments, there is the following, "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you."||

There are other instances of the same kind, but these are a specimen of what I mean when I say that the character of the Epistle of S. James is eminently practical, that it enters into our everyday feelings and occupations, and that it gives

\* S. James i. 26. † Ibid. ii. 17. ‡ Ibid. iv. 7. || Ibid. iv. 8.

us advice and rules of conduct fitted for the most common occupations of life. And this is what makes it so valuable; I am not setting it above other parts of holy writ, but in the economy of God's providence different parts of Scripture seem to fill up different places, just as the different limbs of the body perform different offices, but all necessary for the welfare of the whole body.

Now, having made these general remarks, let us come to a more particular consideration of that portion of S. James' Epistle, which forms the text. The Apostle is going to warn persons of the sin of making their plans without any reference to God's providence, of the impiety of acting (as we are all perhaps inclined to act) just as if we were able of ourselves to do all we wished, and were not dependent for every breath we draw on the mercy of God; he speaks to such persons in that plain practical manner of which I have said so much, "Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? it is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away." "Go to now," that is, "be ashamed of yourselves." You see S. James rebukes such persons sharply:

his words are words of rebuke, and justly so, because these persons might be shewn to be foolish and irreligious on their own confession; for if a man were to say, "I shall go into such a city and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain," and you were to ask such a person how he knew he should live a year, he would at once confess that he did not know whether he should even live a day or an hour; so that the man himself would be as sensible of his being wrong as you could be, he would know that he had formed a plan which God only could give him strength to execute, and therefore that in not making a reservation that he would do this or that if God pleased, he was guilty of want of piety towards God. And therefore S. James does not *argue* with such persons, but at once rebukes them, "*Go to now;*" and he strengthens his rebuke by a reflection which applies to all plotting and planning for the future, "What is your life? it is even a vapour which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." The Apostle has taken the most light and quickly passing thing which he could, a vapour, a smoke, which the sun or wind disperses in a moment, and we know not what has become of them; such is life, says the Apostle, you may think yourself strong, and likely to live many

years; you may compare your life to something strong and lasting, a green shrub or an oak; but I compare it to a vapour, which is here one minute and gone the next: men have ere now been in as good health as you are now, and have made their plans for buying and selling and getting gain, just as you are doing now, and within a day have been dead. You must have heard of many such cases yourself, and if you think that you are made of different stuff from them you deceive yourself: no, if you would be wise carry this about with you, let it be the foundation of all your actions, let it be your thought by day and by night, let it be your prayer to God to make you feel it more powerfully, let, I say, your constant thought be this, "My life is but a vapour, which appears for a little time, and then vanishes away!"

Here is another of those inestimable practical maxims, which may be found in the Epistle of S. James. I intend to offer you a few thoughts upon it.

Now in the first place I will remark, that it is a very mysterious part of God's dealings, this making our life so uncertain. If we were not so thoroughly accustomed to the fact, we should, I think, all consider it a very remarkable thing, that God should make so much to depend



on man's life, and yet should leave it so entirely unknown to him how long he will live. With other creatures besides man the case is very different; we are not taught that any other state of being belongs to brutes, and as they are liable to be destroyed at our will and for our use, it seems a merciful provision which we can at once understand, that they should not know what is going to happen to them; it would obviously be the cause of much pain and trouble to them, and so far as we can see, with no advantage: but when we consider the position of man, that he is expressly only as on a passage to another life, that this is only the beginning of his being, and that nevertheless all his future happiness hangs on his short life here, that on the use he makes of his time now hangs the awful question of heaven or hell,—I say, when we consider all this, it must, I think, appear strange to us that the time given us here should be so uncertain. A man has a work to do, a great work, a work compared with which everything else he does is mere trifling, and yet he does not know whether he shall have twenty years in which to do it, or ten, or a few months or days. Surely if we were not accustomed to the thought this would seem strange to us; it is different from most earthly arrangements; men who give a piece

of work to be done assign a time for doing it, they do not say, "I *may* come to-day or to-morrow, or perhaps not for twenty years, but whenever I come I expect the work to be ready." Or again, to take a slightly different view of the case, it must appear strange that such different periods should be given to different persons to do the same work; one person has only childhood, another gets into youth, another is left to mature old age, and falls asleep rather than dies. Some too have long warning of their end; a man falls into a consumption and knows that within a certain time he must die, and so he has time as it were to get himself ready; while another is cut off on a sudden, and apparently in health drops down and expires; one man has frequent warnings by illness, and is in such a state that he knows he is liable to be cut off any day; while another has some sudden accident and is gone. All this is strange; it is of no avail to shut our eyes to the fact that such is the world we live in; irreligious people see that the state of things is as I have said, and they solve the riddle by saying that there is no God who sees and cares for the world, that all goes by chance, that there is no such thing as providence; and it will always be a temptation of Satan to try and make us believe

that there is no providence over us. And I will warn you that this is no new trial: David had the same trial, and he has recorded his thoughts for us in a very beautiful psalm;\* he says, "Truly God is loving unto Israel, even unto such as are of a clean heart. Nevertheless my feet were almost gone, my treadings had well-nigh slipt. And why? I was grieved at the wicked: I do also see the ungodly in such prosperity; for they are in no peril of death, but are lusty and strong;" and then he said, "I have cleansed my heart in vain and washed mine hands in innocency.....Then thought I to understand this, but it was too hard for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I the end of these men."

It will throw all the light required on the difficulties of which I have been speaking, if we remember one thing, namely this, that our state here is one of trial; we are not told to do this thing and that so much for their own sake, as for the sake of seeing whether we will obey God or no. Why were the Israelites made to wander in the wilderness? "To humble them, and to prove them, to see what was in their hearts, and whether they would keep God's commandments or no." Why did not God make

\* Ps. lxxiii.

this world one great Paradise, full of all trees and fruits, with no cold, no trouble or sorrow, no poverty, no toil; and why did He not leave man unfettered by laws, so that he should not be able to offend? Because there would be no trial or discipline in this: the state of happiness is for another world; this is to be a state of trial. The whole history of the world is contained in a figure in the history of Adam and Eve; they were placed in a position in which they might be happy, but in which they must be tried and must prove obedient; they must not eat of the forbidden tree; it was a simple command, but it was unmistakeable in its meaning; God's creatures must not be independent, but must be tried and found faithful.

Now if we bear this in mind, we shall not wonder that it has pleased God to make man's life here so doubtful as it is; for what is it which is to be shewn by a man's life? whether he will *obey* or no. And no man has any right to say, "Lord, I will follow thee, but first let me" do my own pleasure: no man may say, I will have my youth to myself, and serve God in my old age; it is an insult to our heavenly Father even to think of such a thing: and therefore what profit would it be to us to "know the measure of our days, that we might be certain how long we had to

live"? Is it that we might see how long it would be safe to put off God's service? nay, the question is not at all whether you will serve God at some future time, but whether you will serve Him *now*: and it signifies not that you have ever such good intentions of serving God; if you deliberately refuse His service now, you are guilty. And you see that the force of that word *now* depends entirely upon the uncertainty as to whether there will be any *future*. We speak of the future as if it were something certainly to come, we speak of doing this and that to-morrow as if to-morrow were sure to come; but if God calls us away this night, what *future*, what *to-morrow* will there be for *us*? there will be a to-morrow for *some* doubtless, but will there be a to-morrow for *us*? Thus, you see, we may not reckon on to-morrow, we do not know whether there will be such a thing, and so the present becomes our great concern, the present is ours; the past is gone and cannot be recalled, the future may never be, but the present is indeed our own to work in, and the most powerful persuasive that we can have to set to work at once, is the uncertainty of our having any other time allowed us.

In this way, I think, we see something of the explanation of the mystery of God's dealings in

making our lives so uncertain ; we see that purposes of trial may be carried out thus better than in any other way ; and if any man feel inclined to murmur, we can assure him, that if he does not submit himself to God's will as things are, undoubtedly he would be just as stiff-necked, or rather more so, were he assured that he should live a hundred or a thousand years.

And so of that other point I mentioned, namely, the difference of time allotted to different persons ; this also seems quite consistent with a system such as we know that of God to be. For what is man's trial ? simply this, whether in the position in which God has placed him he will strive to live a life pleasing to God. The last judgment of God, be it ever remembered, will be a judgment according to works ; men will be judged according to the things they have done in the body, whether they be good or bad ; and whatever advantages we have received here, of these we must give account : and if this be so, why should not length of life be distributed in the same way in which wealth and other blessings of God's providence are distributed ? he who receives much will have to give an account of much ; and he who desires long life in order that he may take his pleasure forgetful of God, only wishes for coals of fire on his own head, he only heaps up

to himself wrath against the day of wrath. Of all sad sights with which this sin-blighted world supplies us, there is perhaps none more sad than that of old age, visibly getting very near the grave, and yet with no thought of any thing beyond, no love for God, no heavenly tastes, but only a heart bound up with this world, and a taste which can only be gratified by such sensual delights as must necessarily pass away when death comes.

I will next observe, Christian Brethren, that the truth in the text is the best truth to carry about with us in order to enable us to set things at their right value. If the uncertainty and shortness of life make those unhappy who are negligent of the will of God, in the same proportion will it give peace and comfort to the minds of those who *do* set themselves to live according to His holy will: for the troubles of life will appear trifling to him, who thinks of himself as a traveller on his road home; a person on a journey will put up with many inconveniences, because he says they cannot last long, and home will appear even pleasanter after a rough journey. "I reckon," says S. Paul, "that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed." And the same consideration equally stamps a value on the plea-



sure as on the pains of this life: he who thinks he may at any moment be called away will scarcely set his heart much on his earthly possessions; he will think it worth while to put a curb upon those tastes which can only be gratified here, and which he cannot carry away with him. Why is it that many of us are so shamefully set upon things of this world, that we do not live for another? because we do not sufficiently carry in our minds the fact of the shortness and uncertainty of our life. S. Paul and the other great pillars of the Church evidently had this thought as one continually uppermost in their minds; this made them indifferent to things temporal and evidently set upon things eternal; this marked a value, and a very trifling one, on all they saw about them whether pleasing or painful, the pleasing was not much to be desired because it was so shortlived, the painful was not much to be dreaded because it was so soon over. And I think, Christian Brethren, we have all something to learn in this matter; few of us, I am sure, live as we should live did we expect to be called the next moment to meet our God; and though through the frailty of our natures this is a difficult thing, yet at least it is well to see our deficiency and to know what we are to strive after; it is well to aim high; in this life we shall never be such as we would be,

but still the more we strive to attain to, the more continual communion we attempt with things unseen, and the more we attempt to govern our lives according to the rule given by the greatness of things eternal, and the uncertainty of things temporal, the more nearly shall we attain to the perfect pattern which has been shewn us in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Lastly, Christian Brethren, I wish to consider the question of S. James, "What is your life?" in a sense rather different from that intended by the Apostle, but yet one which will afford us much instruction and comfort. "What is your life?" We have seen that an ordinary glance at the world supplies us with a very uncertain and a rather melancholy answer. It tells us, "you are born to trouble; you are born in sin, and you live in bondage; you are in bondage to your own corrupt affections, you are in bondage to death, you are in bondage to Satan; your life is but a vapour which soon passes away;" and that is all which if left to ourselves we should know. But, thanks be to God, we have a better answer to give to the question; let him who wishes to know what his life is, look at the life of our blessed Saviour. He came to shew us what man might and ought to be, and what by union with Him each of us may be. He passed a life of

pain indeed, and His life was but as a vapour, it soon disappeared, but it did not disappear for ever, *Christ rose again*: here is the great answer to the question, "What is your life?" If any one is troubled by this question, his answer is in the Creed which he repeats, "I believe in Jesus Christ—who was born—who was dead and buried—who rose again the third day—who ascended into heaven." In the life of our Lord, Christian Brethren, we are to see the life of man represented as in a picture: what He has done we may do, not in our own strength of course, but here is the very blessing of the Christian Church, that we may rise above our own strength, we may claim union with Him "who was born, dead, and buried, but who rose again." If Satan tempt us saying, "You shall not rise again," the answer is, "Christ *did* rise again." It is not even a question of something future which we are to look to, we have not a mere promise of rising again, we have an actual resurrection to look back upon, and to point to as the first-fruits of the risen Church of God. Thus in the life of our Lord we see the explanation of all the riddles of our own life; and when we repeat the Creed we do not rehearse a mere barren catalogue of facts, but we claim communion by faith with Him who has gone the way of all flesh

before us, who suffered because suffering belonged to man, who rose again that man might rise too.

“What is your life?” may Satan say to us, when tempting us to distrust of God and to despair. Let the answer ever be, “My life is indeed but a vapour, which appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away; but, thanks to God, I believe in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord, who was dead and was buried, but who rose again.”

## SERMON XVII.

### ADVENT.

S. MATTHEW xxi. 4, 5.

All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.

THE procession into Jerusalem, of which we read to-day in the Gospel, is worthy of our particular attention, because it was the only occasion on which our blessed Lord received public honour after His ministry had commenced. Since the days of His childhood, when the wise men came from the East to offer Him gifts and homage, until this triumphal entry into Jerusalem, there had been nothing like royal honour paid to Him. He uniformly avoided it; we read that on one occasion, when He perceived that they would take Him by force and make Him a king, He departed

and went into a desert place; it was no part of our Lord's office to receive honour from man, but on this occasion of His last entrance into Jerusalem He acted differently, He went in with pomp and ceremony, and with crowds before and behind shouting Hosanna. Now as this was the *most* pompous event of our Saviour's life, as He allowed himself on this occasion to be honoured with human ceremony more than on any other, we may, I think, measure the humility of His life by looking at this the least humble event of it; when I say the least humble, of course I would say it with all reverence, not meaning to imply that this event was of a different character from all the others of His wonderful life; but I mean, that if we examine the most pompous event in which our Lord was concerned, and find that humility is the predominating feature even of *that*, we shall the better enter into the extreme lowliness of the other parts of His life, in which there was not even a shadow of the appearance of pomp;—even as, if you would estimate the lowly spirit of some king, who had the character of being humble in his high estate, you would not look at his actions when he was by himself or only with his own family and friends, but you would watch him on some stately occasion and see how he bore himself when multitudes

bowed to him, and when courtiers flattered and all tongues sang his praise. For this reason I suppose it was, that the particular portion of Scripture was chosen which forms the Gospel of this day : the Church wished to exhibit to us the unspeakable humility of her Lord, and so she has exhibited Him to us making His stately progress into Jerusalem, and says to us, this is the most pompous event in the life of Christ, study it well, and then see what degree of humility you will be inclined to attribute to the rest.

Let us then give a few minutes' attention to the entry into Jerusalem which our Saviour made, and see what it teaches us. And the first thing which strikes us is, that however gorgeous it might seem, it was a *funeral* procession ; our Lord was entering Jerusalem for the purpose of suffering death ; during His life He would allow of no public honour ; He would not let any of His enemies have it to say that He loved the praise of men, or that He was endeavouring by help of the multitude to make Himself a king ; and I think if we estimate the feelings of our Saviour's mind, so far as they were human feelings, we must compare them with those of any one of us going with great pomp and ceremony, and surrounded by crowds willing to do us honour, and yet knowingly going to execution ;



there would be little in the pageant to flatter our vanity and make us proud, if the hand of the executioner were ever before our minds ; nay, there would be something so painfully incongruous in the joy manifested in a funeral procession, that every fresh shout of the multitude would oppress us more than the last, and we should feel that to go to death amid insult and ignominy would be more tolerable than to go to it with pomp and rejoicing. All this must be taken into account in estimating this last triumphal procession : it might appear to careless people to look like a love of applause ; but to one who considers the feelings, which our Lord's divine knowledge of what was about to happen must have produced in His mind, it will appear as the most wondrous instance of humility, and submission to the will of God, and crushing of all regard to self, that our Lord should have submitted to ride to His death with all the mocking pomp of one who was going to take possession of a kingdom.

Moreover, if we look into the procession itself, we shall see marks of humility such as were sufficient to be noted even in ancient prophecy. For our Lord rode not in any royal chariot, but on an ass which His disciples found for Him tied by the roadside ; and hence it was that the prophet Zechariah spoke of this entry even as a mark

of our Lord's lowliness, saying, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just and having salvation; lowly and riding upon an ass and upon a colt the foal of an ass."\* And I think we must see in this a mark of lowliness, that the Lord of heaven and earth should, on the only occasion on which He submitted to public honour, allow Himself to be carried on an ass taken from the roadside. There was in all this a contempt of earthly show, which exactly harmonizes with all the rest of our Lord's life, with His birth of poor parents in a stable because there was no room for such as them in the inn, with His homeless life, His pillowless head. There is nothing in His pompous entry at all out of harmony with the rest of His life, but quite otherwise, for we see there the habitual lowliness of His life made more conspicuous by being presented under the appearance of worldly show.

This was the most pompous event in the life of Christ, this was the nearest approach which He the King of kings made to the ways of earthly kings. Judge then of the rest, think what the rest of His life must have been, when you have already exhausted all those passages in it, which had the least appearance of worldly

\* Zech. ix. 9.

show. At this time especially, the lowliness of Christ during His abode on earth is to be our principal thought; the advent which we celebrate this day was a lowly advent, a most lowly one, and therefore the Collect speaks of Jesus Christ coming "to visit us in great humility"; and if we do not realize in some degree the greatness of His humility, we miss the benefits of this season, we have imperfect incomplete views of God's dealings with us, and we lose the influence which the thought of this humiliation ought to have on our lives.

Let me, then, endeavour to suggest to you two or three thoughts, which by God's grace may have the effect of deepening your sense of the humiliation, which the Son of God submitted to in taking our flesh. They may not be new thoughts, but on that very account the more requisite to be stirred up in your minds; for the great truths of the Gospel are not new sparkling truths, just discovered by the wit of man, but old truths, which affect us not by their brightness and variety, but by their solemnity. The great truths which affect your spirits' health, Christian Brethren, are truths which you learnt in childhood, and which perhaps have lost their edge from your being accustomed to them; if you want to realize the greatness of the message of God to

man in the Gospel of His Son Jesus Christ, fix your minds on those old truths which you have known so long, which you will find in the Creed, and the more you render those by prayer and meditation living truths, instead of suffering them to degenerate into dry historical facts, the more you will enter into the greatness of God's love to you and the depth of the duty which you owe to Him.

Remember, then, this simple fact, that He who was born of the blessed Virgin Mary did not then first exist; He had lived long before, even before the earth was made; nay, it was He that made the earth and called into existence her who was privileged to bear Him. We speak of God making the world, but if we wish to speak accurately we ought to ascribe creation not to God the Father only, but also, in some sense, to God the Son, for we read that "by *Him* God made the worlds."\* In what manner the creation of the world was due to the second Person of the Holy Trinity, we cannot say; all we know is that so the world was created in the good providence of God. And this second Person in the Holy Trinity was begotten from the first, so that He is called the eternal *Son* of God; of course we cannot tell how such terms as "begotten" and

\* Heb. i. 2.

“being a Son” can express the relation of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, but we know this, that the Father only may be spoken of as God in Himself, the Son is, as the Nicene Creed expresses it, “God of God,” that is, God begotten of the one supreme, self-existent God. But the divine nature belongs equally to the two, He who was begotten of the Father is of one substance with the Father; not merely resembling His Father more or less, even as we poor creatures in some respects are in the image of God, but of the same substance and being, so that because the Father is God the Son is God. Wicked or mistaken persons have at different times tried to darken this great truth: they have said that the Son was made by the Father, even as we were made; that there was a time when the Son did not exist, and that He was not of the *same* substance with the Father, but only of *like* substance; and careless people may think that there is not much in these distinctions, and that the Christians in early times wasted their labour in fighting for the truth as we have it in the Creeds of the Church: but consider, can any thing be unworthy of contending for which concerns the being of God? can it be a slight matter to determine whether the holy Babe, who was born at Bethlehem, was a man, or an angel, or

God? Therefore do not allow your minds to be entered by silly fancies, that the Church is wrong in stating so carefully all points connected with this great matter; the whole character of the Gospel depends upon it, the reverence and the joy too with which we shall welcome the event of Christmas-day, will all depend upon the correctness of our belief respecting the being of our blessed Lord before His appearance in the world. Strive, then, to realize the great truth, that He who was born of the Virgin Mary was Very God of Very God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, and that by Him all things were made. Try to get this truth before your eyes, and after dwelling upon it make an estimate of the humiliation to which He submitted, when He concealed His glory in human flesh and was born of a woman. Compare this humiliation with any other of which you can conceive; fancy for instance a king becoming a beggar and submitting to every kind of hardship and indignity for the sake of his people, or imagine even an angel leaving his place in heaven and the pure presence of God to live for thirty years as a man; and then see how any picture like this is put in the shade, and its proportions altogether dwarfed beyond words, when it is compared with the actual fact of the Son of God becoming man.

This is humiliation indeed, humiliation which becomes the more overwhelming the more we think upon it; nay, if we think upon it very intently it seems to take away our power of thinking on anything else, even as the dazzling of the sun, if we look upon it with naked eye, prevents us from seeing any other object. And this point of view might be sufficient perhaps to give some right thoughts respecting the event of Christmas-day; but I will suggest another to you. What I have said hitherto refers only to the humiliation of our Lord, so far as it consisted in merely laying by His divine robes of glory; it considers rather the garments He stripped off than those which He put on instead; and if He who was Very God had taken upon Him the nature of an angel, it would have been a great condescension, for this would have placed in a position of obedience, and in the place of a creature, Him whose will all things were wont to obey, and who was not created, but the only-begotten Son of God; but what shall we say when we find that He took upon Him the nature of us who have defiled ourselves with sin! I do not of course mean that He had sin, (God forbid!) but He took the nature of sinful men, an infirm body, a spirit liable to be tempted by Satan. Here is the crowning point; the humbling of Christ did



not merely extend to giving up His pure divine existence, but it went further a great deal, and involved the assumption of the nature of creatures who had rebelled against Him and were under a curse. I cannot give you any due conception of what is implied in this, because we cannot form at all sufficient notions of the manner in which sin is regarded by Almighty God; but I think we have seen enough of sin in its effect on the world to believe that it is a very dreadful thing, and to give some faint conception at least of the humiliation which is involved in the Son of God putting Himself in the place of a sinner.

Perhaps I could suggest other thoughts to you, but I will not say more on a subject which must necessarily be difficult, being so far beyond our comprehension: all I will say to you is, think on the statements I have made to you; do you believe them? you profess very frequently that you do, and therefore I will not say you do not, but only I would advise you to make your belief as living and as vivid as you can; when you repeat the words of the Nicene Creed Sunday after Sunday, do not let its words become mere matter of form to you, but remember that they are true words, that Jesus Christ our Lord really was what the Creed states, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light

of Light, Very God of Very God, of one substance with the Father, by Whom all things were made, Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was born of the Virgin Mary. These statements are mysterious enough, but still they are true statements, and I do not wish to diminish their mystery, but only to impress upon you their truth, and that it is only by believing them and realizing them, that is, having them before you as truths continually to be lived upon, instead of being repeated just now and then, that it is only thus that you can set the proper value upon the Gospel and upon your share in its blessings.

Here then let us pause, Christian Brethren, and adore in silent admiration the condescending love of Him who humbled Himself so deeply for our sakes. I think that if we have views, at all approaching to those we ought to have, of the humiliation of the Son of God, implied in His taking human flesh, we shall hail His Advent which we are about to celebrate with feelings almost too deep for words. What shall we think of the love of Him, who, though rich in the fullness of the Godhead, for our sakes became poor, and stript Himself of His heavenly glories, and was made in the likeness of man? What shall we think of the mercy of God the Father, who gave

His only Son to be thus made low, that through Him He might freely give us all things? What shall we think of the malignant, deadly nature of sin, which could not be forgiven without such a sacrifice? And what shall we think of the justice of God, which could not forgive sin without such an atonement? These thoughts and others must come into our minds, when we witness in imagination the birth of Christ on Christmas-day; it is to no purpose that that birth is brought before us, unless it does bring such thoughts into our minds, and make us dwell upon them seriously. He will but profane Christ's holy Feast, who sees in it nothing but a day of mirth, and does not enter into the meaning and the greatness of the wonderful birth which he is celebrating; he who would keep Christmas aright must think of his own nature and that of God, his own infinite smallness and God's infinite majesty, and of the unspeakable humiliation involved in the condescension of the Son of God to human flesh and human infirmities; must look upon the Babe lying in the manger as indeed Him who existed before all things, and who made all things, and who for us men and our salvation submitted to be thus; and when he has remembered his own sin which caused this condescension, and his own unworthiness of God's mercies,

he will be prepared to enter without profanation into the stable of Bethlehem where the Holy Child is laid.

And yet perhaps not wholly prepared, for I think that no one may gaze upon the infant Saviour, until he has first made vows respecting his own life. Christ humbled Himself in order that His humiliation might influence us; He did not come down from heaven, merely to obtain pardon for us and save us from punishment, but He came that He might renew us and make us more like what we ought to be; and His life is intended to influence ours, and it is for us to determine that so far as in us lies He shall not only be our Saviour but our pattern. Consider, for instance, that great virtue of humility which I have been endeavouring to shew you was in an unspeakable degree the characteristic of the Incarnation, as of the whole life of our Lord; the manger cradle for His infant head was the type of His whole life, and the only instance of splendour which He suffered was the procession of the multitude when he went up to Jerusalem to die: now hereby has our Lord set us an example which we are bound to follow, we have no right to be proud and ostentatious and haughty when our Lord was so humble; He has shewn us that humility is the spirit which belongs to His

Gospel, and he is not worthy of Christ who does not in this respect try to imitate his Master. And what a value has the humiliation of Christ stamped upon the pomp and glory of the world! how perfectly ashamed must we feel of all selfish strivings after earthly things, when Christ for the love of man left the joys of heaven! if our hearts are set upon this world, and the vanities of this world whatever they may be, we cannot be worthy disciples of Him, whose birth and life were a protest against those vanities: if we are Christians indeed, we must be content to set all things at the value which our Lord has put upon them, and we must make up our minds that our lives shall resemble His. I say therefore, that a due preparation for Christmas implies, not only a reverent admiration of the life of Christ, but a sincere intention to imitate it. And perhaps there is nothing in which we so much required a pattern, as in this virtue of humility of which I have been speaking, because humility is exactly the opposite of man's natural disposition: man is naturally prone to be proud and arrogant, and to be fond of applause, and to set much store by the gaudy pleasures which the world has to offer him; but Christ has marked the other temper as the heavenly one, He has shewn us that the spirit which is pleasing to God is a quiet, meek,

humble spirit, which has its treasures in heaven, and therefore thinks little of earthborn joys.

Wherefore, if we would prove worthy of our profession, and would wish to grow like Him who has condescended to become an example for us, let us determine by God's grace to live henceforth with our eyes more fixed upon our pattern; let us ever study to keep before our minds the greatness of that humiliation, by which our Lord hath taught us that we too must humble ourselves, and become as little children, if we would enter the kingdom of heaven; let us strive to suppress all pride and unchristian temper, and vanity and self-conceit, and love of the world, and to cherish the temper which is peculiarly the temper of the Gospel, and that preference of heaven above earth which Christ our Lord taught us. For indeed there is a second Advent in prospect, when He who once came in humility will come with power and majesty, when the angels, who announced the coming of Christ to the shepherds who watched their flocks, will announce His coming to all earth and heaven, and to those who live and those who sleep under the dust of ages, and then all must give an account of their works. Then shall we have to say how far the birth of Christ has affected us, whether it has made us better, and really taught us the greatness of the next world

and the smallness of this, whether it has made us humble and Christlike in our temper, or whether it has left us as we were. It will be a melancholy thing, at the second coming of Christ, to have to confess that we have despised His first, that we could see no comeliness in Him, and that His humble garb so hid His glory that we were not able to discern the wonderful brightness of the Godhead which shone through it. I pray you, Christian Brethren, to think of that second coming, and how you will dare to meet your Lord, if you have not thought worthily of His first humble Advent and have not endeavoured to live so as He has set you an example. For you must meet Him in very deed then, whom now you expect only in figurative commemoration; and every eye shall see Him clothed again in those glorious robes which He once laid aside for our sakes, and no longer despised and poor, but the acknowledged Judge of mankind. Let us pray that we may all meet Him with joy, and that we who now prepare to commemorate His birth together, may be found meet to be partakers of His glory.



## SERMON XVIII.

### THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE.

S. LUKE, xix. 45, 46.

And He went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought;

Saying unto them, It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer : but ye have made it a den of thieves.

THIS was one of the last acts of the public ministry of our blessed Lord ; when He cleansed the temple, as recorded in the text, He had come up to Jerusalem for the last time, and that to suffer. There is, therefore, attaching to such a deed as this an extraordinary interest ; one of our Saviour's last deeds ; something on that account to be studied with reverence if anything deserves to be so studied.

This was not the first time that our Saviour had cleansed the temple : we read in the second chapter of S. John's Gospel, that at the beginning of His ministry He did the same thing ;

S. John is the only evangelist who records the first cleansing, and he remarks that the disciples immediately thought upon the words, "The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up." There was something which quite astonished them, especially in these early days when they did not know so much as afterwards they knew of the office of their Lord; there was something, I say, which astonished them in the boldness of a man who had the courage to say, "This is the house of God, and ye shall not profane it! this is My Father's house, and ye shall not make it a place of merchandise." And it is remarkable how easily the occupants of the temple seem to have given way; their own consciences no doubt told them that Christ was right, and that they with their merchandise and money-changing were profaning a place which ought to be holy; and there was also a divine solemnity about our Lord's conduct, a look of grave rebuke in His countenance, and an awfulness about His words, which gave to His scourge of small cords a power which naturally belonged not to it; and the profaners of the temple went away ashamed. Such power have small instruments in the hands of God, and such strength of conviction is there in words few and simple addressed to men's consciences by the Spirit of God.

It will perhaps astonish some of you that such a profanation of the temple, as to allow it to be used as an exchange and place of buying and selling, should have been permitted by persons so jealous of its honour as were the Jews. But you must bear in mind the pretence for the practice: the Jews came at the time of the Passover, according to the command of God, from all parts up to Jerusalem to present themselves before God and celebrate the Feast; and they had sacrifices to make, but those who came from a great distance could not easily bring their offerings with them, and therefore they were allowed to bring money and buy their offerings in Jerusalem. Also persons who came from distant parts, where money was used which was not current at Jerusalem, found it convenient to have places where they could change their money into such as would be accepted by those who sold the sheep and oxen and doves intended for sacrifices. Hence you will see why it was, that the temple was made the scene of this buying and selling and changing of money; it was not of course right that the temple should be so used, but you see the reason of it, and that it was not mere desecration of a sacred place, but rather a use of a consecrated building, which it was imagined that the ne-

cessity of the case and the convenience afforded to the worshippers of God sufficiently justified. This is quite of a piece with other conduct of the Jews, who, under the pretence of promoting the service of God, seemed to think nothing of breaking His express commands; they honoured Him with sacrifices at the expense of violating His temple, just as in another case they gave to His treasury while they broke the command of honouring father and mother. But our Lord exploded all such hollow pretences; God's temple was to be kept holy, and was to be a place for people to pray in, not to buy and sell in; the case was clear, the temple was being desecrated, the holy place was being defiled, and our blessed Lord's zeal for His Father's honour at once roused Him to action, and so He cast out them that sold therein and them that bought, saying unto them, "It is written, My house is the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves."

In the few words which I shall speak to you, Christian Brethren, on the subject of the text, I shall endeavour to call your attention to one or two of the most marked features. And in the first place, I would bid you notice our blessed Lord's *zeal*, that zeal of which the psalmist said, speaking prophetically, "the zeal of Thine house hath

even eaten me.”\* Fancy yourselves in the courts of the Jewish temple eighteen hundred years ago; it is the time of an approaching Passover, and Jerusalem is full; hundreds are every minute flocking up to the temple and returning after presenting themselves and making their offerings; there is much buying and selling, people from a distance travel-worn approach, and buying offerings devote them to God; the place scarcely looks like a sacred temple, there is bustle, confusion, disputing between buyers and sellers, and probably a great deal of iniquitous dealing and extortion; but still this is the custom of the place, so it has been now for many years, and men have become so accustomed to the sight that they have almost forgotten that those courts were intended only for the quiet aspirations of prayer, and not for the rude noise of the mart or exchange. Suddenly, however, a man appears who has other views of what is right; the custom of a nation is nothing to Him when God’s honour is concerned, and He has courage to tell all those who are engaged in desecrating the temple of the nature of their sin; “Take these things hence,” He says to those who sold doves, and He overthrows the tables of the money-changers, and with a scourge of cords drives the oxen and

\* Ps. lxi. 9.

sheep out of the temple. The men stand aghast, but do not venture to resist; there is an authority in the voice and manner of Him who commands them, which holds them entranced; moreover, this is He who works such miracles and whom all reckon a prophet. And thus the house is cleansed, and the honour of God upheld. Observe, Brethren, the zeal of Him, who alone among the thousands of those who assembled in the temple had the courage to maintain the honour of God. Let Christ our Lord be in this as in other things a pattern to us; let the honour of God be with us a governing principle: if the command of God be clear one way, then even though everybody be on the other side, let us have the courage to take our stand on His command. And perhaps a little more courage on our part would be rewarded with the same kind of victory which our Lord obtained; men's consciences were convinced and they yielded to His word, and so I think it will frequently happen in our time. Suppose, for instance, some one is persecuted because he or she persists in honouring God's house, or in joining in holy Communion, or in performing any religious duty; then I would encourage such an one by saying, My dear Brother or Sister, imitate the zeal of our Lord Jesus Christ, who stood as almost one among thousands

protesting for the honour of God, and He was victorious and God was glorified; and so doubtless will every humble protest made for the glory of God in the midst of a perverse generation be at length crowned with success, and will redound to the honour of His name. And frequently, when we least expect it, God gives such strength to an honest and humble effort to glorify Him, as fills the hearts of adversaries with shame, and touches their consciences, and sometimes converts their souls. Wherefore, "tarry thou the Lord's leisure; be strong and He shall comfort thine heart, and put thou thy trust in the Lord."

But again; the conduct of our Lord shews us the reverence that is due to God's house. The Jewish temple was emphatically a *house of prayer*, it was a place where God had promised His special presence to those who came to worship; and this Church is a house of prayer, Brethren, a place in which Christ has promised His presence to two or three met together in His name; and if you say that the temple was peculiarly sacred because it was the place of sacrifice to God, then you must remember that in this house we are privileged to commemorate that sacrifice as past which they in the old temple typified as to come, and there would seem to be even greater reality in that which is the memorial of the past, than in



that which is the shadow of the future: hence in every way I think the dignity of a Christian church is not to be reckoned as lower than that of the Jewish temple; and whatever honour was due to the temple, as the house of God and the place of prayer, is due to this our temple. Christian Brethren, this house is not the house of man, but the house of God; it is not the house for bodily ease and listless lounging, but it is the house of prayer; it is not a house for vanity and the exhibition of a body tricked out with baubles and ornaments, but it is the house of humiliation and lowly confession of sin. Think what Christ our Lord would say were He to appear suddenly in the midst of us, as He did amongst them of Jerusalem. I fear there would be some things which would not altogether please His righteous eye; I do not think that He would consider the posture of all of us such as suited His Father's house; I think He would see several eyes wandering about, when the mind ought to be too intent on prayer to allow of wandering eyes.

And there are some things which, like oxen and sheep, are things not clean enough to be brought into the temple of God; all evil feelings, and pride, and unkindness, and envy, and self-conceit, and other wicked emotions may not be brought into God's temple; they must be driven

out with scourges, they must not be tolerated. I would that we all bore this in mind, and that we could pause as it were on the threshold of God's house, and clear our minds and hearts of unclean things before entering. These things are bad enough anywhere, but in the church they are worst of all; the church should be a type of Heaven, and they who meet there should be like angels, having but one feeling in their hearts, and that feeling the love of God.

Then also there are some things which, like the doves, though pure in themselves, have no business in the temple of God; the cares of this world, things necessarily engaging our attention at other times, may not enter these doors: God's church is intended to be as it were a little enclosed spot where worldly things may not enter, a green pasture shaded by palm-trees in the midst of a scorching wilderness, where God's people, like the Israelites of old, may rest themselves, and forget their toils, and dream of the bright land of promise. Wherefore we must say of all thoughts, which though right in themselves are wrong here, because they belong to the world and not to the church, "Take these things hence." And indeed, Brethren, you will find the mercy of the command; for it is a gracious provision of our God to give us this day of rest, and call us to His own

house of holiness and peace, and bid us leave all our troubles in our own. Many a man, whose heart is eaten out with the biting carking cares of this careworn world, would have his heart strengthened and his spirit revived, if he would but come to this temple of peace, from whence our Lord has commanded all such things to be taken away.

But again; the tables of money-changers must not be here; this is no place for thoughts of gain, it is a profanation of God's temple to bring them here. Christ would not allow any money-dealings in the temple of old, and He will not allow them here: wherefore we should remember that all thoughts of worldly profit are to be left outside the church porch; this is no place for them, this is a house of prayer, this is the house of God.

Thus meditating on the cleansing of the temple by our Lord, Christian Brethren, we seem to gather very useful lessons for the regulation of our own conduct in regard to the temple of our God. I believe that a want of reverence for God's house is but too common in these times; such want of reverence is by no means indicative either of wisdom or christian growth, nay, so far from it, that I believe the more we encourage a lowly reverent feeling for the temple of God as the place of His more immediate presence, and

the more we keep our thoughts in check while present in His house, and the more we love the place where His honour dwelleth, (even as the Jews loved Jerusalem because it contained the temple of God, according to those words of the Psalm, "because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek thy good,") the more will our whole conduct be softened, and rendered reverent and devout. The conduct of our blessed Lord seems to teach us that a love of God's house because it is His house, and indignation when we see it desecrated and abused, are feelings which naturally result from a genuine love of God.

And, lastly, Christian Brethren, we cannot but be reminded, by our Lord's cleansing of the temple in the days of His flesh, of that awful cleansing of His temple which will one day take place, when all that is vile and offensive shall be cast out of His temple, and every thing that maketh a lie cast into the lake of brimstone. Let each one of us ask himself, Will Christ when He comes to judgment say to me, Take this man hence? Indeed, Brethren, we have no excuse for being of the number of those who are unclean; for have we not once been washed? have we not once been justified and sanctified? and have we not even now a fountain to wash away sin and uncleanness, a Jordan in which we may wash and be clean?

That will be an awful cleansing of the temple; this earth, which is the Lord's, and was built by Him as a temple for His own honour, how is it full of loathsome creatures! how is it marred by sin! its beautiful courts, which should be thronged with worshippers, how are they filled with idolaters! with men bowing down to gods of their own devising, to the idol self, to the idol gold, to the idol sloth, to the idol intemperance, to the idol pride, and to a legion of other false gods, which sit in the temple of God and entice away worshippers from serving Him! Verily the appearance of a temple of God has almost departed from this world; here and there is one who prays to Him, but how many hundreds to one are there who have other gods! Nevertheless this earth *is* the Lord's and the fulness thereof; this *is* His temple; and one day He will assert His lordship, and will come to cleanse His temple, and say, "Take these things hence." Then shall be a restitution of all things, and a new heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. God grant that we who meet here now may meet again in that new temple, that everlasting "house of prayer!"

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